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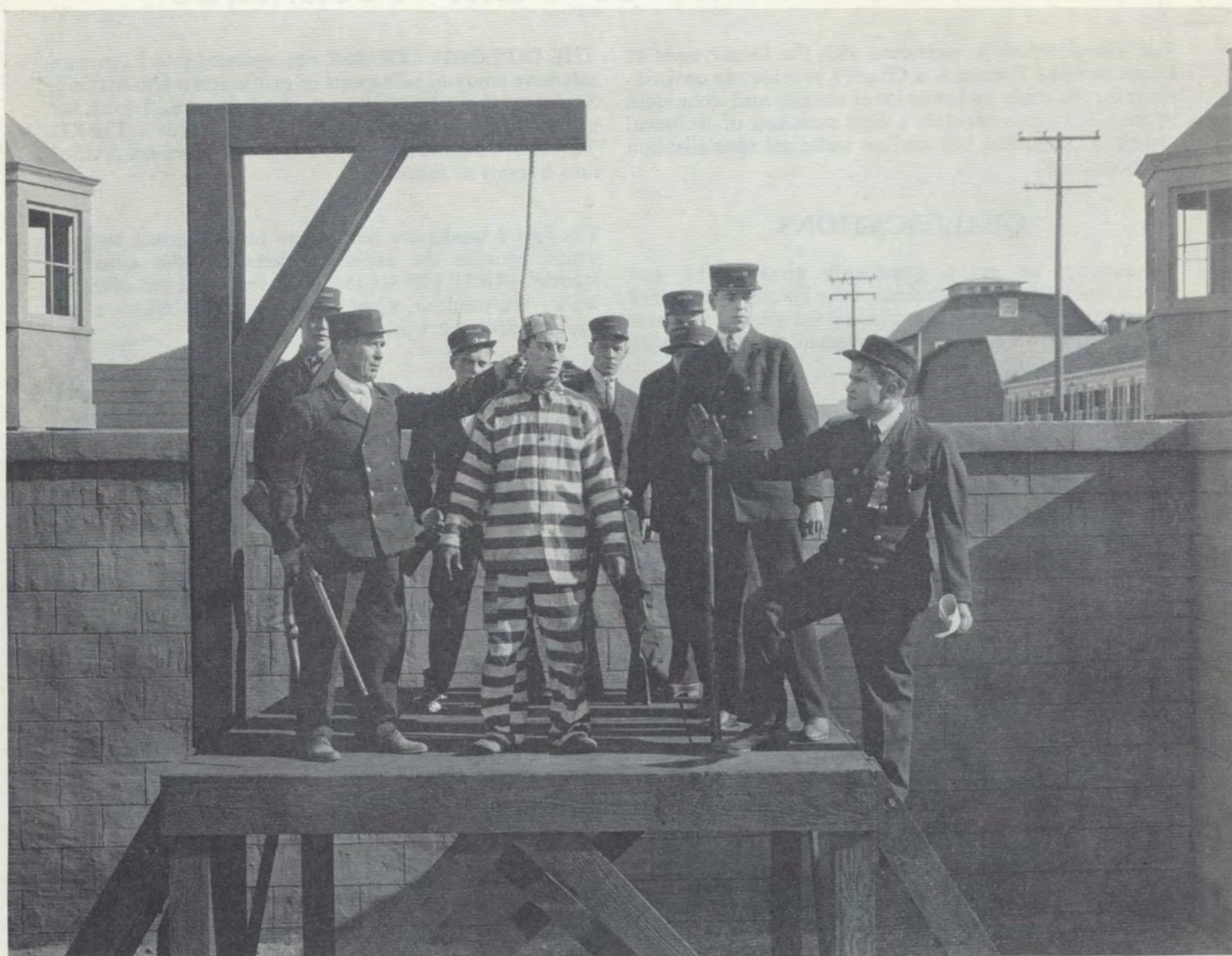
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THE INTERNATIONAL FILM QUARTERLY

## Contents Winter 1967/68

VOLUME 37 NO 1

---

### Features

- 9 London Festival, 1967
- 17 In the Picture
- 24 Goforth
- 47 Film Clips: ARKADIN
- 52 Correspondence
- 54 Film Guide

---

### Articles

- 2 Incitement Against Violence: PHILIP FRENCH
- 14 Bellocchio: CHRISTIAN BRAAD THOMSEN
- 21 Meet Whiplash Wilder: CHARLES HIGHAM
- 26 Who's Afraid of Alfred Hitchcock?: AXEL MADSEN
- 28 Too Hot Not To Cool Down: BARRY DAY
- 33 The Two Bezhin Meadows: DAVID ROBINSON
- 44 Warrendale: JAN DAWSON

---

### Film Reviews

- 38 La Religieuse: TOM MILNE
- 39 Far From the Madding Crowd: JAMES PRICE
- 40 Jeu de Massacre: PENELOPE HOUSTON
- 40 Cold Days: DAVID WILSON
- 41 La Marseillaise: BRENDA DAVIES
- 42 Who Are You, Polly Maggoo?: JAN DAWSON
- 42 The Happening: DAVID WILSON
- 43 Hunger: ELIZABETH SUSSEX
- 43 Poor Cow: BRENDA DAVIES

---

### Book Reviews

- 50 Film Censors and the Law: JOHN MORTIMER
- 51 Motion Pictures from the Library of Congress  
Paper Print Collection: DAVID ROBINSON

---

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Philip French



# INCITEMENT AGAINST VIOLENCE





THE SIMULTANEOUS APPEARANCE of Arthur Penn's *Bonnie and Clyde* and Roger Corman's *The St. Valentine's Day Massacre* has given a new lease of life to what many of us had thought a dead or dying genre—the classic gangster movie. Their popularity, and particularly the runaway success of the former, means that in all likelihood we're in for a further cycle of gangster films. Already, while Hollywood prepares the goods—the present production situation makes the immediate exploitation of a paying trend less easy than in the past—a British distributor has rushed out a double bill of *Al Capone* (1959) and *Dillinger* (1945), whose eponymous heroes are described in the new advertising as respectively 'The Number 1 Underworld King' and 'The Most Notorious Killer of them all'. They are also said to be 'Together for the first time'—hardly surprisingly inasmuch as Dillinger was in a state prison during the ascendancy of Capone, and Capone was in a federal penitentiary while Dillinger enjoyed his short-lived notoriety. This opportunistic programming has been rewarded by audiences larger than either film attracted on its first exhibition, and a return of other old favourites seems inevitable.

The double revival in several ways parallels and overlaps *St. Valentine's Day* and *Bonnie and Clyde*, without of course in any way matching their quality. The murder of seven associates of George 'Bugs' Moran's North Side gang by agents of Al Capone on the morning of February 14th, 1929 is a feature of *Al Capone* and numerous other gangster films (including *Some Like It Hot*). It is part of the social history of the inter-war years, and the ambiance from which it springs has been used as a political analogue by, among others, Brecht in *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*. (But, as Martin Esslin comments, 'Brecht knew Hitler; he knew very little about Chicago.') *Bonnie and Clyde* as dimly remembered historical figures belong to the same crime wave as John Dillinger; and *Bonnie and Clyde* as a movie is not unrelated as we shall see to the screen *Dillinger*, appalling as that film is when viewed in isolation.

My purpose here is less to review *Bonnie and Clyde* and *St. Valentine's Day* than to relate the hard, objective, anti-mythical, anti-heroic character of Corman's film and the wry, romantic, mock-heroic character of Penn's picture to the development of the gangster genre on one hand and to certain currents in American life on the other. Let me say now that I consider *St. Valentine's Day* and *Bonnie and Clyde* the high-water marks of the two divergent streams of the gangster movie to which they belong. Furthermore, they serve to clarify these streams as no other gangster films have previously done and in consequence each achieves its apparent aim—which is, I take it, to transcend the genre and create useful images of American life. As their superficial trappings—colour, meticulous decor, period costume, vintage automobiles, easy violence, blazing machine guns, biographical data and the rest—have tended to lump them together (to the inevitable detriment of *St. Valentine's Day*), let me indicate a few important distinctions between the two.

\* \* \*

First *St. Valentine's Day Massacre*: the time is the Twenties just before the Wall Street Crash; the setting is exclusively urban and static; the characters are recent immigrants, mainly Italian and Irish and predominantly Catholic; they are organised and professional, their actions planned and purposive; they are successful and reflect success in their way of life; violence may be endemic but it is directed towards specific ends. *Bonnie and Clyde* is quite the reverse. The time is the Thirties after the Depression; the setting is rural and the central characters are always on the move; they own nothing, not even the cars in which they live; they are of white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant stock, disorganised and unprofessional; none of their actions is planned or purposive; they are failures; their violence is unpremeditated, a form of gesture. *Bonnie Parker* and the Barrows are reacting against their sense of failure; the Capone mob embody a perversion of a national dream of success. The organised urban mobster belongs to a carefully delineated underworld which closely corresponds to the general structure of society; *Bonnie and*

*Clyde* belong not to the underworld but to the underside of American life, their careers having neither shape nor pattern. Both films are after a kind of truth, and it is this search which has determined their style.

Forty years have now passed since the first major gangster film, Sternberg's *Underworld*. The screenwriter Ben Hecht tells us in his autobiography how he conceived it. An experienced Hollywood producer had informed him of the peculiar rules that had to be observed for depicting heroes and heroines and then:

"An idea came to me. The thing to do was to skip the heroes and heroines, to write a movie containing only villains and bawds. I would not have to tell any lies then . . . As a newspaperman I had learned that nice people—the audience—loved criminals, doted on reading about their love problems as well as their sadism. My movie, grounded on this simple truth, was produced with the title *Underworld*. It was the first gangster movie to bedazzle the movie fans and there were no lies in it—except for a half-dozen sentimental touches introduced by its director, Joe von Sternberg."

But it was the coming of sound that same year which made possible the first gangster cycle. Without a soundtrack to capture the screech of tyres, the chatter of machine guns and the rasping dialogue, *Little Caesar* (1930), *Public Enemy* (1931), *Scarface* (1932) and their endless imitators would have been unthinkable. Reflecting the mood of their time, these movies were harsh, cynical, angry and above all ambivalent in their attitude towards their protagonists. These years from 1929 to 1935—from the Wall Street Crash to the middle of Roosevelt's first term, with the waning Prohibition overlapping the Depression and the bland Herbert Hoover giving way to the New Deal—were a confused period in which America seemed to be falling apart at the seams, ripe for revolution.

The gangster films of this period are clearly the ones that Robert Warshaw had in mind when he wrote the article 'The Gangster as Tragic Hero' in 1948 (reprinted in *The Immediate Experience*), and it was not surprising that he found it difficult to accommodate more recent films to his thesis.

\* \* \*

The subjects of these movies were the organised urban mobsters who had thrived as a result of Prohibition. The archetype was Al Capone, an Italian immigrant who had risen since 1920 from hired gunman and brothel bouncer to multi-millionaire head of the Chicago underworld, public celebrity, controller of judges, politicians and policemen. He was a legend in his lifetime, and remains so after his death: it is no accident that a lithograph of the 'Big Fellow' is to be seen on the wall of the British gang boss's sitting-room in *Robbery*. From the activities of Capone and his association with the *Unione Siciliana* and the Mafia springs the organised criminal network, the Syndicate, which runs the length and breadth of America today. *The St. Valentine's Day Massacre* is in my view the first feature film which has begun to make sense of the complicated relationships between these different groups; other films have ignored them or oversimplified them beyond comprehension.

Capone himself was the inspiration of the early gangster films—W. R. Burnett's *Little Caesar* is based on his career, Ben Hecht drew on personal knowledge of Chicago crime, and used the familiar nickname, for *Scarface*. And sitting in the audience when these movies appeared was another group of criminals or potential criminals from different backgrounds, their names soon to become household words and nearly as familiar as Capone's: John Dillinger, Lester Gillis (alias George 'Baby Face' Nelson), the Barker family, Charles 'Pretty Boy' Floyd, Alvin Karpis, George 'Machine Gun' Kelly, Bonnie Parker and the Barrow brothers.

Whereas the urban gangsters, as I've previously suggested, were members of immigrant minorities, grotesquely parodying the Horatio Alger myth and consciously in search of social status, this latter group were fourth or fifth generation WASPs from rural communities of the Mid-West and South-West. All of them had minor criminal records, had served the inevitable periods in state reform schools. Then suddenly they took off on the most extraordinary and widely publicised



crime-wave in American history in the years 1933-35. They robbed filling stations and banks, and staged kidnappings in colourful, reckless ways. They loved guns, were enthralled with images of violence, were compulsive exhibitionists. Rarely attempting to conceal their exploits, they positively proclaimed their identity, boasted of their achievements to victims, took photographs of each other, wrote to the press. John Dillinger, for instance, first achieved notoriety by leaping over a bank counter in imitation of Douglas Fairbanks, delighted in snapping pictures of cops from his car, and was shot down in 1934 when emerging from the Biograph cinema in Chicago where he'd been seeing the gangster movie *Manhattan Melodrama*.

In effect, these pathetic psychopaths were more like the cinematic image of the big-time gangsters than the real gangsters that inspired the films. As Robert Warshaw says of his 'tragic hero':

"The gangster's whole life is an effort to assert himself as an individual, to draw himself out of the crowd, and he always dies *because* he is an individual; the final bullet thrusts him back, makes him, after all, a failure. 'Mother of God,' says the dying Little Caesar, 'is this the end of Rico?'—speaking of himself thus in the third person because what has been brought low is not the undifferentiated *man*, but the individual with a name, the gangster, the success; even to himself he is a creature of the imagination. (T. S. Eliot has pointed out that a number of Shakespeare's tragic heroes have this trick of looking at themselves dramatically; their true identity, the thing that is destroyed when they die, is something outside themselves—not a man, but a style of life, a kind of meaning.)"

This posturing, this narcissistic self-awareness, was seen in extreme form in the real-life Bonnie and Clyde and is caught accurately in the movie. The photographic poses they strike during the fraternal reunion at the motor court are exactly based on the pictures captured by the Kansas police after the gang's hasty departure from the Joplin garage-apartment in April 1933; the Bonnie Parker poems used are also authentic, with their self-conscious myth-making, their references to Jesse James, and their explicit death wish. Yet while they were the most self-conscious, the Barrows were also the most ineffectual and pathetic. "They're just a couple of cheap filling station and car thieves," was the contemptuous comment upon them by 'Machine Gun' Kelly's partner, Albert Bates; and John Toland in his study *The Dillinger Days* describes them as "not only outlaws but outcasts."

Although the cinema influenced their style, the image they had of themselves, Hollywood was not responsible for starting these doomed young men on their lives of crime. They were creatures of a footloose, muddled era and were enabled to pursue their brief careers through the availability of fast cars and the inefficiency of local law enforcement agencies. Also, it might be said, they survived as long as they did—which was briefly—through their very lack of planning, their psychopathic unpredictability.

Tracking them down was the finest hour of the emerging FBI, which then, and since, has proved singularly ineffective in countering organised crime. Quite deliberately, the law is excluded from *St. Valentine's Day* except as patrons of speak-easies and potential acceptors of bribes in the North Clark Street garage (the irony here is that the bribes are not accepted precisely because the officers are gangsters in disguise). In *Bonnie and Clyde* the FBI's role has been omitted and the pursuers characterised solely as vindictive south-westerners; this is not entirely false and is certainly in keeping with the overall 'truth' of the film. Obliquely the FBI's function is referred to when Clyde tells Bonnie's mother that the law is deliberately building them up in order that their eventual capture will appear that much more impressive.

Indeed the elevation of these essentially minor, if deadly, criminals to Public Enemy No. 1 status (the term first coined to describe Capone and subsequently attached to a series of other villains as the current title holder bit the dust) was part of the process by which J. Edgar Hoover's federal agency achieved national renown. In this Hollywood played a role

too, along with a sensation-hungry popular press. (The best review of this situation, if somewhat over-critical of the FBI, is to be found in Fred Cook's *The FBI Nobody Knows*.)

The Hollywood Production Code, first adopted in 1930, was in the early Thirties proving as ineffectual as the Mid-Western police. Faced with reduced attendances and closing cinemas, the studios turned out increasingly violent and ever sexier movies to lure the public back. As a result, threats of governmental and private censorship loomed, most notably from the Catholic church. The permanent effects of this were the establishment of the Legion of Decency and the institution of mandatory sanctions for breaches of the Code. Will Hays, president of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, appointed Joseph I. Breen as enforcer of the Code with power to award or withhold a Seal of Approval.

The commercial importance of crime movies, however, was too strong to be resisted and a solution was found—which was to centre attention on the police instead of the criminals. So the G-men entered the movie pantheon with a nickname allegedly deriving from 'Machine Gun' Kelly's nervous exclamation at his 1933 arrest: "Don't shoot G-men." (There still exists some doubt as to whether Kelly was using the underworld slang for Government men or merely stammering—or indeed whether he even used these words at all. Anyway they are part of the FBI's instant mythology.) The film *G-Men* came in 1935 from Warner Brothers, the studio that had launched the first gangster cycle with *Little Caesar*, and it starred Jimmy Cagney who had been their *Public Enemy*. The same ingredients and the same quantity of violence remained. But where Prohibition and the first gangster films tended to glorify crime and by implication criticise society, the new wave of films and the public outrage at current real-life depredations (especially the string of kidnappings of which the Lindbergh case was the most sensational) glorified investigators, tended to make the audience condone unorthodox methods of law enforcement, and canalised discontent into a lust for vengeance.

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As I've said, there was little doubt in anyone's mind (including Capone's own) that gangster movies of the early Thirties were about Capone. Both Ben Hecht and Howard Hawks report having received visits from representatives of the incarcerated mobster during the filming of *Scarface*. In his autobiography Hecht claims to have convinced them that the film wasn't about Capone. Hawks, according to Kenneth Allsop in *The Bootleggers*, reacted differently:

"The man said that the Big Fellow was opposed to gangster films, particularly those that show underworld characters as rats and not heroes. I told him that the Big Fellow would have to lay down his money at the box office if he wanted to see how I was doing the film. I believe Capone is giving funds to the campaign against this kind of movie."

Whether there is any truth in this last statement it is difficult to say. It is just possible that as a *soi-disant* respectable citizen and generous contributor to Catholic causes Capone may have made donations to organisations associated with the movement that brought about the Legion of Decency. Not that he need have worried too much about his fictional portraits. That was the problem of Will H. Hays. And in 1934 Hays sent an urgent telegram to Joe Breen which read in part: "No picture on the life or exploits of John Dillinger will be produced, distributed or exhibited by any member . . . This decision is based on the belief that the production, distribution or exhibition of such a picture could be detrimental to the best public interest. Advise all studio heads accordingly."

The ruling remained in force until 1945, Hays' last year in office. Meanwhile the gangster/G-man cycle had petered out with a strongly elegiac fizz in Raoul Walsh's *High Sierra*, to be replaced by private eye films. And by the war movie, which offered a new roster of heroes and villains and even greater

STILLS FROM: "LITTLE CAESAR" (EDWARD G. ROBINSON), "MACHINE GUN KELLY", "BABY FACE NELSON", "THE RISE AND FALL OF LEGS DIAMOND", FAR RIGHT: "AL CAPONE", "ST. VALENTINE'S DAY MASSACRE" (ALSO AT BOTTOM OF COLUMN), AND "DILLINGER".







opportunities for patriotically condoned violence. When shortly before VE-Day Monogram Pictures released *Dillinger*, the Hays Office was unruffled: John Dillinger had been dead eleven years and his scarcely remembered career seemed trivial beside those of the public enemies in Berlin and Tokyo whose final reel was approaching its end. *Dillinger* anyway did not spark off any imitators. The big studios were shifting gear from war films into peacetime 'now-it-can-be-told' espionage stories like *13 Rue Madeleine* and *House on 92nd Street* (note the specificity of the locales—which anticipates *St. Valentine's Day* but differs markedly from the abstract character of the classic gangster movie). Darryl F. Zanuck, who had launched the gangster cycle when head of production at Warners, had returned to his own 20th Century-Fox lot from wartime service to initiate this new cycle. His executive producer Louis De Rochemont brought to the task his experience with the thudding narrative style of *March of Time* (a form better known now through the parody of it which opens *Citizen Kane*). Within a year this semi-documentary movement had turned to civil crime with *Boomerang*, *Call Northside 777*, *Kiss of Death* and *Street with No Name*.

Zanuck described his Warners policy as stories "snatched from today's headlines." The new style might have been called "extracting stories from today's files." And there was no shortage of local or federal agencies willing to cooperate to secure a little publicity for their activities. One result of this was that it was always the official view that the public was given and the commentaries were frequently personalised in the voice of an FBI man, a cop or a treasury agent. Where some possible criticism of authority might be implied, careful disclaimers were made, of the kind that accompanies the waving Stars and Stripes at the conclusion of *Call Northside 777* or some years later hypocritically proceeds the action of Kazan's *On the Waterfront*. (There is no such cant in either *St. Valentine's Day* or *Bonnie and Clyde*, which is both part of their honesty and a cause—in the mind of some observers—for anxiety; by implication and intention they are subversive.) Names of course were changed in these semi-documentaries—as much to further the ends of cinematic convenience as to protect the innocent.

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Then in 1947 came a significant amendment to the Production Code which read:

"No picture shall be approved dealing with the life of a notorious criminal of current or recent times which uses the name, nickname or alias of such notorious criminal in the film, nor shall a picture be approved if based on the life of such notorious criminal unless the character shown in the film be punished for crimes shown in the film committed by him."

There were three reasons for this amendment: the increasing use being made of seemingly authentic material, the precedent created by the award of a Seal of Approval to *Dillinger*, and most important of all, the death on January 25th 1947 of Al Capone, who had died a free man after having served a mere seven years in gaol for income tax evasion. The new Code provision, confirming as it did the lifting of Hays' old restriction, made any honest account of Capone's life virtually impossible, and gravely restricted, perhaps even vetoed, any moderately realistic approach to the facts of contemporary organised crime. So the anticipated flood of Capone movies was blocked at source; only Joseph H. Lewis' *Undercover Man* (1949), which dealt extremely circumspectly with the Treasury investigation of the Capone empire, readily comes to mind. Anyway, with the House Un-American Activities Committee raking over the cold ashes of the pre-war years, no one in Hollywood was feeling in a particularly nostalgic mood, and Will Hays' successor, Eric Johnston, was not exactly encouraging controversial or socially critical movies. In 1948 he told a meeting of screenwriters: "We'll have no more *Grapes of Wrath*. We'll have no more *Tobacco Roads*. We'll have no more films that show the seamy side of American life. We'll have no more pictures that deal with labor strikes. We'll have no more pictures that show a banker as a villain."

There were of course a fair number of crime films in the years that followed. Hollywood could scarcely survive without them. In *Key Largo* Edward G. Robinson's Johnny Rocco was even daringly presented as an anti-Communist. There were plenty of flabby shots at grappling with organised crime; and dozens of movies about juvenile delinquency, stressing its environmental origins and usually exploiting its violence. Before and after Huston's *The Asphalt Jungle* (1950) there were frequent pictures concerning elaborately planned robberies, and in that same year there was the only major attempt to recapture the pristine glory of the pre-war Warner Brothers gangster films—Raoul Walsh's *White Heat* with James Cagney.

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But it was in the late Fifties that Hollywood was struck by another major gangster cycle—this time entirely devoted to resurrecting famous criminals of the inter-war years. With the exception of the synoptic *FBI Story* (1959), an expensive, lengthy advertisement for the Federal Bureau of Investigation in which many celebrated hoods appeared (though not the Barrows), they were all medium or low budget black-and-white movies, biographical in development and mostly semi-documentary in treatment. And they fell into the two groups that I've already mentioned. On the one hand were the films dealing with organised crime during the Twenties, centred on New York and Chicago. The main Chicago ones were Phil Karlson's *The Scarface Mob* (1959), deriving from the television programme *The Untouchables* (a peculiarly vicious series based on the 1957 memoirs of federal agent Eliot Ness), and Richard Wilson's *Al Capone* (1959); the principal New York ones were Budd Boetticher's *The Rise and Fall of Legs Diamond* (1959), Joseph M. Newman's *The Big Bankroll* (1959) about the underworld financier Arnold Rothstein, and Joseph Pevney's *Portrait of a Mobster* (1961) about Dutch Schultz (and scripted by Howard Browne, author of *St. Valentine's Day*). On the other hand were the pictures concerned with the small-time lone-wolf criminals of the Thirties: Don Siegel's *Baby Face Nelson* (1957), in which John Dillinger also figures, Roger Corman's *Machine Gun Kelly* (1958) and William Witney's *The Bonnie Parker Story* (1958). Together they pretty well exhausted the field. But despite their documentary claims few of them took serious pains in getting the facts straight, and none used this wealth of fascinating material for anything more than conventional action entertainment with fashionable period trimmings.

*Baby Face Nelson* and *Legs Diamond* stand out from the rest and have been rightly praised. Their influence can be seen on New Wave movies from France. Yet they were not more markedly influential than the ancient *Dillinger*, which was clearly the kind of Monogram picture Godard had in mind when he dedicated *Breathless* to that defunct studio. (Its successor Allied Artists was responsible for several of the films mentioned above.) Directed by old UFA hand Max Nosseck, *Dillinger* has the elliptical, abstract quality that minuscule budgets and short shooting schedules forced on Poverty Row and which Godard was to adopt from choice. Not merely to adopt but, with Truffaut, to integrate into a self-conscious style, at once new and a homage to the American gangster film. In this way has the energy, the economy and the exigency of the traditional gangster film re-entered the American cinema via *Breathless*, *Shoot the Pianist* and *Pierrot le Fou*.

That the French cinema has influenced *Bonnie and Clyde* is conjecture on my part, though I should be surprised to hear that Penn hasn't been affected by that source. It is of course quite feasible that he could have made his own extrapolation—just as Herbert Blau, by taking his cue directly from Beckett rather than through Jan Kott, came up with a *King Lear* at the San Francisco Actors' Workshop that closely resembled Peter Brook's Stratford production. But this would not change my argument in any essential way. In linking *Pierrot le Fou* with *Bonnie and Clyde* I am not making an aesthetic point alone, any more than in tracing the relationship between crime movies and real-life crime I'm seeking to discredit the cinema. There has been a continuous interplay between the





"PUBLIC ENEMY".

reality of crime and mass media images which has influenced the nature of crime, the function of law enforcement, the attitudes of the public and their ability and willingness to act. "Nothing finer in the Hollywood movie colony," the real-life Capone assured an interviewer visiting his Florida mansion. Set this against the opening of *Bonnie and Clyde*, where on their first meeting Clyde Barrow affects to take the Dallas waitress for a film star.

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*The St. Valentine's Day Massacre* opens with a printed statement that "every character and event herein is based on real characters and events," and to a greater extent than any semi-documentary crime film it sticks to the brief. Sometimes reasonable conjecture is passed off as fact, which is acceptable. And to preserve the cool, distancing tone of the commentary we are informed of what the forthcoming victims are thinking on the morning of the massacre; this is debatable. The only totally unsupported fabrication is the personal despatch by Capone of Joseph Aiello on a west-bound train; Aiello in fact died later and in different circumstances. The aim of this scene presumably is to link Capone to ritual revenge murder, though the same point is made, on the basis of sounder evidence, by depicting Capone's execution of Scalisi and Anselmi.

Another thing that sets *St. Valentine's Day* apart from the usual gangster movie is the frank admission of the characters' racial origins and antagonisms. Words like 'Wop', 'Mick', 'Kraut' and 'greaseball' (once terms proscribed by the Production Code) are thrown around in a casual way without meeting with the traditional liberal rebukes that have previously sanctioned their use. These derogatory epithets in this context serve to establish the forces at work within the

American melting pot and define the unaccommodated immigrant aspiration that brought about organised crime. The overall effect is quite different from the usual implication of alien villainy.

Unlike the heavily fictionalised *Al Capone*, no names are changed or distorted for purposes of exposition. The film is not primarily a psychological study; the biographical facts given as each character first appears are footnotes to show his relationship to a general situation, and the situation is illuminated by focusing upon the massacre which brought to a climax the rivalry between the Capone and Moran gangs. The film is not concerned with a personal vendetta, though it acknowledges this element in the brilliantly contrived flashbacks, shot as a sort of bloodstained newsreel, recalling the murders of Dion O'Banion and Hymie Weiss, and the October 1926 assault on the Hawthorne Hotel, Capone's Cicero headquarters. Indeed the film in some ways calls to mind is Francesco Rosi's *Salvatore Giuliano*, in its attempt to elucidate a state of affairs and avoidance of entanglements in personal psychology. The only American film I have seen to equal it was a television study of the Mafia associate Alberto Anastasia, broadcast a few months after his death in 1957; in which Eli Wallach played Anastasia and Don Ameche a television producer. The programme was built around the notion of a producer attempting to explain organised crime in terms of Anastasia's career, and finally concluding that the task was beyond him.

The commentary at the beginning of *St. Valentine's Day* makes two crucial points. First it situates the massacre as lying between nostalgia and cataclysm: between the creation of Mickey Mouse and Lindbergh's Paris flight—and the Wall



Street Crash. Secondly it refers to the gangs doing battle "just as modern nations and corporations do." The analogy is scarcely new, but the treatment is less perfunctory than before. The elimination of the North Side gang is treated as a perversion of a business takeover (or in American parlance, a 'raid') or a military operation, suggesting a parallel with the Cold War or a possible association of North Side and North Vietnam. When the Capone executive committee meets in its boardroom the camera tracks round the gathering in a strangely wavering way to inculcate a sense of unease. The totality of the image the film creates tends to suggest that crime is a part of the American system, a product rather than a perversion of it. Far from being rebels, Capone and Moran are at one with this corrupt society, and the former is rightly shown as a typical middle-class moralist. At the end the commentary fights shy of drawing any conclusions. Perhaps the makers feel they have gone far enough and thus resort to a few platitudes about the massacre arousing public indignation and a demand for reform, suggesting that the same kind of indignation is necessary today.

In view of what follows, as a sort of coda, more elaborate comment was maybe uncalled for. After a laconic statement that no one was ever convicted for complicity in the massacre, we see the violent (and obscure) deaths of the actual executioners and hear of the post-war demise of Moran (in Leavenworth penitentiary of lung cancer in 1957) and of Al Capone in 1947 of syphilis. The film fades out on Capone's marble headstone in a Chicago cemetery—'Alphonse Capone—Rest in Peace.' When Richard Wilson made *Al Capone* eight years ago it was necessary to stage a vicious beating of his hero by fellow Alcatraz inmates to satisfy the demands of the Code and release the anger of the audience.

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Where *St. Valentine's Day* operates through a measured, even tone, *Bonnie and Clyde* functions by a rapid alternation between farce and tragedy. It is a more sophisticated film, and is obviously less concerned with the true identities of its protagonists. The characters' backgrounds are filled in by odd suggestions and initially by way of a series of photographs that accompany the credits. These recall the Walker Evans pictures in James Agee's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* and speak eloquently of the poor farming families that had shared little of the Twenties prosperity and were among the hardest hit victims of the Depression. It is the essence of Bonnie and Clyde's situation on which Penn and his screenwriters (David Newman and Robert Benton) have seized.

Many scenes in the film are presented with an almost documentary fidelity: the fight at Joplin; the escape from the besieged motor court; the death of 'Buck' Barrow and the capture of Blanche at the Iowa picnic grounds in July 1933; the final police ambush in Louisiana in May 1934. There are also several significant changes or omissions. The real Bonnie Parker left her husband in 1933 to take off with Clyde; she had a voracious sexual appetite and for a while was accompanied by a lover. Neither she nor Clyde—as almost goes without saying—was as attractive as Faye Dunaway and Warren Beatty, and Clyde was possibly homosexual. The character named C. W. Moss is an amalgam of two drivers, William Daniel Jones and Henry Methvin. Jones joined the gang in much the way described but remained reluctantly; at one point he had to be chained up at night. Methvin's father betrayed the pair to the police, and interestingly the fusillade of bullets which eventually felled Bonnie and Clyde sent their car careering down a hill to finish up in a stream. This strange, farcical touch has been dropped in favour of the shuddering bodies beside and within a stationary car, a decision which tells us a good deal about the film's conception. Among other omissions are numerous opportunities for further violence, such as a raid on a Texas gaol party and several cold-blooded killings (including two highway patrol men).

In a certain sense, then, the film can be said to be created partly in terms of Bonnie and Clyde's idea of themselves, and to project a strange, timeless, drifting existence, shifting between dream and nightmare. Their undirected energy and unconsidered violence form the one vital element in a society

that has come to a halt. In the background throughout there is inactivity: the stores are shut or without customers; the farms have been taken by the banks and boarded up; no one is working in the fields; the rolling stock is idle in the goods yards; in the quarry used for the family reunion the machinery is standing still; the banks they rob contain little money or have collapsed. On the walls, peeling Roosevelt campaign posters suggest a fading hope. For help and understanding the Barrows can only turn to the dispossessed: the expelled farmer who borrows Clyde's pistol to shoot at the bank notice on his former property; the working man who's allowed to keep his money during the hold-up and later says "They did all right by me and I'll buy some flowers for their funeral"; the itinerant Okies who give the wounded couple food and drink. They know they are doomed and cannot bear to contemplate it—the sudden mention of death ends the show they're putting on for the captive undertaker and his fiancée. They create roles for themselves because they cannot bear to face what they are; they move incessantly and act irresponsibly because they lack the capacity to weigh the alternatives—until eventually there is no alternative.

The Barrow gang's fascination with violence is shared by Arthur Penn. He has sought to examine its roots previously in a variety of ways—through Billy the Kid trapped by his own myth in *The Left-Handed Gun*, as a Kafkaesque allegory in *Mickey One*, and in the anatomy of a hate-filled Texas town in *The Chase*. All three move towards *Bonnie and Clyde*, where he appears to see violence as a legacy of the frontier spirit, a result of the repressed sexuality of puritanism, an expression of an undercurrent of nihilism which arises from a deep-rooted national frustration. But he contains this conjecture within a film that is both the ultimate artistic comment on the Dillinger mentality and a remarkable metaphor for a large segment of contemporary American life. Planted firmly in the Thirties, *Bonnie and Clyde* has much to tell us of the current ghetto explosion and the milieu that produced Lee Harvey Oswald.

Of the film's other considerable merits, particularly its technical ones, enough has already been written. Perhaps some word is needed, however, on the dangers inherent in this type of picture, a subject on which I've touched earlier. It is the fate of many works of art to be misunderstood and Penn cannot be blamed for making a film so subtle in its morality as to lay itself open to misinterpretation.

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In a recent *New Yorker* I saw some new men's and women's clothes advertised as 'The Speakeasy Look', and no one should be surprised to see 'The Bonnie Parker Look' on current fashion pages. Business is business. A more disturbing indication of the differing responses the film invites can be observed in the advertising for *Bonnie and Clyde* itself. The poster used in London was a photograph of the gang posturing beside a car with the carefully worded, rightly admired, text:

"Clyde was the leader. Bonnie wrote poetry. C.W. was a Myrna Loy fan who had a bluebird tattooed on his chest. Buck told corny jokes and carried a Kodak. Blanche was a preacher's daughter who kept her fingers in her ears during the gunfights. They played checkers and photographed each other incessantly. On Sunday nights they listened to Eddie Cantor on the radio. All in all, they killed 18 people. They were the strangest damned gang you ever heard of."

This certainly suggests the mood of the film. Outside London I saw another poster, with a crude drawing of Bonnie and Clyde blazing away with machine guns and the caption "They're young! They're in love! And they kill people! The most exciting gangster film ever made."

I am reminded by this of a conversation that was recorded for a radio programme of mine some years ago with a Hollywood screenwriter who specialised in low-budget thrillers and crime stories. In a discussion with this liberal, high-minded fellow on one of his scripts which had been turned into a peculiarly inflammatory movie, it was suggested to him that the picture had become "an incitement to violence". "Yeah," he agreed, "that's the way it turned out. And I wrote it as an incitement *against* violence."



# LONDON FESTIVAL



"FAR FROM VIETNAM".

## FAR FROM VIETNAM

"The only thing we agree on is that we are against the Vietnam war," says a New York Upper East Side Leninist. "The rest of the time we're at each other's throats. It's like a scenario."—*Time*, October 27, 1967, reporting the Washington demonstration.

**F**AR FROM VIETNAM is against the war. A group of European film-makers have put together a collective scenario composed of fact and fiction which, intentionally or not, makes an unequivocal statement of dissent. The views expressed are as individual as the personalities of the directors involved, from Godard and Resnais to Lelouch and William Klein, but together they fuse into a composite reaction against a war being fought in a faraway place and dispassionately reported in the American press in terms of 'kill ratios'. For this reason alone, *Far from Vietnam* may be hailed as the most important event of the 1967 London Film Festival, just as two years ago Kenneth Tynan said about *The War Game* that it may be the most important film ever made. One English

critic has already written that it will "create an upheaval in the lives of those who are going to see it across the world."

Is this true? And if it is, in what sense is it true? Film critics are notoriously ignorant about the audiences who see the films they discuss, but one can fairly safely predict that the audience for this film will be mostly composed of dissenters (it has none of the shock value of *The War Game*). So what is the point of the film? A collective exercise in conscience-salving with Vietnam as the catalyst? Catharsis for artist and audience alike? It was this question of the usefulness of the exercise that prompted Truffaut to decline a part in its making. To put it crudely, an hour or two of comfortable fellow-feeling in the stalls won't stop the war in Vietnam. And Truffaut's objection is more apposite when one remembers that Dien Bien Phu preceded the Mekong Delta as a catchword.

The truth is, and it emerges from the film, that there is truth on both sides. *Far from Vietnam* will obviously attract an audience anxious to watch America wash its dirty linen in public (a point effectively made, incidentally, by Peter Brook in Peter Whitehead's film *Benefit of the Doubt*: the



difference between, say, anti-semitism and the kind of anti-Americanism that masquerades under the guise of internationalism is only qualitative). In two hours of film there is many a scene calculated to bring the banners out. General Westmoreland comforts the folks back home ("Civilian casualties do not result from our fire-power; they result from mechanical errors"). Fidel Castro squats combat-jacketed on a hillside and remarks on the paradox that even the combination of the most modern technology and the most superior military force cannot subjugate a guerrilla movement deriving its support from the people. Soporific American television commercials are cut in with newsreel clips of death in the mud of the paddy fields; Vietcong suspects are punched; a peasant is incinerated after a napalm attack.

The images are familiar and emotive, but responsibly and rightly paraded before us. This is Vietnam now. But as its title suggests, this is not primarily a film about the war out there in Vietnam. The reality of Vietnam is the conflict between the richest society in the world and one of the poorest, a conflict eloquently suggested in the contrast between the film's opening sequence—the daily loading of bombs into aircraft-carriers in the Gulf of Tonkin—and newsreel footage of the people of Hanoi running for cover to their pathetically inadequate improvised shelters. But the centre of the film is the *unreality* of Vietnam, what Peter Brook calls "the contradiction inherent in every slice of the Vietnam scene." As Europeans, we proclaim our non-involvement while recognising that we are involved. And this is the paradox the film is concerned to explore.

Both the Resnais and the Godard episodes directly reflect European impotence in the context of the war. We have watched Vice-President Humphrey, greeted by demonstrators in every capital of his European tour, proudly announcing on his return that he saw "a new Western Europe that has achieved an unprecedented well-being." Now we see the European reaction to "the first war everyone can watch." Godard characteristically shows himself behind a camera soliloquising on the film he would have made if he could have got to Vietnam. "It's tough making movies in France, so I thought I'd go to Vietnam," he says, cutting in some of the sub-Brechtian devices (paper tigers and comic-strip) which, for me at least, make *La Chinoise* absurd in a superficial, one-dimensional way.

Resnais confronts us with a writer, engaged to produce a script from Herman Kahn's 'On Escalation', pouring out a confession of the inadequacy of his dissent. "To join the Maquis was no problem... now Vietnam gives us all a good conscience." The effect is theatrical, but the sketch is hard-hitting and uncompromisingly honest. The dilemma for this writer, for these film-makers, and for us, is that we are 'far from Vietnam', conscious both of our involvement and of the impotence forced on us by our non-revolutionary society.

The contradictions reveal themselves most forcefully in the American episodes. Demonstrations and counter-demonstrations, the Great Society locked in a destructive dialogue with itself. On the one side drum majorettes, war veterans, the hysteria of a crowd screaming "Bomb Hanoi"; on the other a wave of uncertain dissent, hippies and Black Power, a frenzied Jew wailing 'na-na-napalm', the Quaker who set fire to his gasoline-soaked clothes.

The importance of *Far from Vietnam* is that it is *not* a propagandist film. For a collective effort it has a remarkable sense of shape, but one is never aware of a conscious shaping. What one is aware of is an examination of 'Vietnam' with all the undercurrents of that emotive word, involving us at a far deeper level than straight propaganda. By doing so, it forces us into a dialogue with ourselves.

DAVID WILSON

## UNDERGROUND

UNDERGROUND OR OVERGROUND, the best of the independent American cinema has an exceptional seriousness of tone. Last year there was a *gravity* about Goldman's *Echoes of Silence* which almost made it supportable. This year the high seriousness of Shirley Clarke's *Portrait of Jason* is the one unarguable

quality it has, and the one quality capable of redeeming the arrogance of the conception and the boredom of having to sit through it.

The idea of an uninterrupted monologue by a negro male prostitute, to be shot at one session in front of a fireplace in a New York apartment, is not so much audacious as demanding. O.K., it's not a commercial movie; but it still seems a lot to expect even the most dedicated film club audience to submit to. I take the question of audience first because it might be argued that the film shouldn't have been shown outside America at all. The making of the film is in the nature of a commitment by Shirley Clarke to the real world around her, and the viewing of the film ought to be in the nature of a commitment by the audience to the real world around *it*; inevitably this is all right for Greenwich Village but not so good for S.E.10. This is a pity, because the film only really takes on its full meaning when an audience is being subjected to it. Miss Clarke is ferociously insistent that her audience should *care*. This is a movie about a man, a real person, Jason Holliday: he's suffering, he's crumbling to bits before our eyes. She allows us no relief or distraction from the spectacle. The camera sits solidly in front of Jason from beginning to end: no music, no interruptions, no provision for the sensualist in us, no pegs provided for any kind of aesthetic justification for the appalling, uncomfortable hell of the whole thing.

Jason himself seems to be pleased to be making a movie. For once everyone is listening to him and he can do his imitations of Mae West and Scarlett O'Hara. He's very camera conscious, bursting into alternate fits of self-pity and hysterical laughter. The first point of the movie is to get him to reveal himself (which he does, ending in a final cathartic breakdown) and the second point is to get him to make us feel guilty. A voice behind the camera asks him about his mother, and he puts on his Uncle Remus act: "She was a nice coloured lady. White folks were proud of her because she knew her place" (screams of laughter). He talks engagingly about his criminal life and somehow manages to make it seem our fault. He is oppressed by memories, haunted by unspecific fears. If he could do something other than what he does, it would be something to make him rich: acquisition is the great good his mode of living has caused him to turn his back on. He is curiously free of the conventional sentimentality about a 'better' way of life waiting in the backwoods.

Those voices from behind the camera are a little unsettling. Jason's imitations aren't very good, nor are his jokes, and the dutiful invisible snickering which follows them is alienating. Similar troubles arise from the questions which are put to Jason towards the end. They are sycophantic in tone and, worse, they are obviously aimed at whipping the wretched man into a final orgasm of self-confession. There is a serious and damaging failure in tact here.

John Korty's *Funnyman* is a continent apart. The work of a group of San Francisco revue performers called The Committee, it contains a number of very funny sketches, an amiable performance by Peter Bonerz as Perry, the comic with aspirations towards being a serious actor, and some attractive photography, using colour and tinted monochrome. It's an engaging movie, with a fast verbal surface and nothing very much inside. But that Perry has to learn to accept and use his own talents is only the most conspicuous conclusion the film comes to. The more interesting theme, which begins to emerge without ever becoming fully explicit, is that the life-style has developed furiously at an external level but only sluggishly at an interior level. Sophistication and rapidity of calculation on the outside is matched by innocence and slowness of assimilation on the inside. I may be misjudging Korty and Bonerz, but I don't think I've fallen into a carefully laid trap to make me feel protective and affectionate towards them (and the film *does* that, for God's sake). I think they honestly feel the way the film suggests they do, and that they really are clever/simple, fast/slow, intellectual/naive in this engaging way.

Of the short films which I have seen, the best is Paul Leaf's *Back to Bach*, a dialogue in bed recorded with an almost Eliotian wit: trousers on the chair and talk about establishing





a relationship. Paul Glickman's *Calypso* is a cartoon with Bristow-like figures and an amusing script; it relates to life and society more closely than most of the European animated films, one can't help noticing. And this seems to be the real burden which the independent American cinema is trying to carry. However slight or unsatisfactory some of the product, there is about it an enviable largeness of intention and a commitment to the medium as a social instrument.

JAMES PRICE

## L'UNE ET L'AUTRE

AT LAST, AT LAST, one is tempted to say, a genuinely Brechtian film. *La Vieille Dame Indigne* almost made the grade, but Sylvie's enchanting performance seemed somehow outside the film, a star turn of great worth rather than simply an old lady shocking her family by her unworthy behaviour. In *L'Une et l'Autre*, Malka Ribovska gives an equally stunning performance—one of 'Garbo-esque intensity', as Richard Roud has put it—but Allio cunningly distantiates it, deliberately making one aware of the performance and cooling it by contrast with her own stage performance within the film.

To define its terms of reference, *L'Une et l'Autre* opens with a sequence in close-up of an old man (Claude Dauphin) complaining of old age, pain and approaching death to a younger woman (Malka Ribovska). Beautifully and accurately played in its melancholy intimations of mortality, the scene is genuinely moving, but then Allio suddenly cuts into long shot and we realise that what we are watching is a stage rehearsal for a production of Tchekhov's *Uncle Vanya*. Immediately reality is withdrawn from the scene and transferred to the actress, Anne, as we follow her off-stage and into her life: a quiet, intense woman, no longer young, who earns her living (obviously) by playing quiet, intense parts in little theatre productions, and who is living with a man she no longer loves but cannot summon up the courage to leave.

A brief encounter at the airport with her admired sister Simone (Françoise Prévost), who has promised to stay for a few days but instead flies grandly on her way after graciously leaving a present of £100, gives her an idea: she will take over

the glamorous, lacquered personality of her sister, and thus find courage to begin a new life. So, moving into the hotel room she had hopefully booked, and providing herself with new, starry clothes and a wig, she timidly eases herself into her new role. So far, so Pirandellian, but the basis of the film is solidly Brechtian and there is no question of identification. Instead, the film proceeds to document the process whereby Anne slowly comes to realise that her face may be a mask, and the mask her true face.

Dissatisfied with herself and her life, Anne is unable to define her dissatisfaction. All she is aware of is her desire for something else. (As with *La Vieille Dame Indigne*, the theme of change is central. "I recognised you instantly," says an old friend Anne runs into. "We were just saying she hasn't changed at all," the same friend tells the man she is living with, before proceeding to coax him back to his old way of life and a job he has already abandoned. And of course one is reminded, subtly but unmistakably, of Brecht's Mr. Keuner and his distressing encounter with the friend who insists that he hasn't changed at all: "Oh!" said Mr. Keuner, and turned pale.") Reality is no help to her, for she hovers in a kind of limbo between relationships, between Julien, the man she has stopped loving, and André, the actor she hasn't yet realised is in love with her. "How can I recognise what I want?" she cries, annexing to herself Borges' description of the unicorn as an animal so rare that it is almost impossible to recognise.

Paradoxically, however, the reality of her situation is defined very precisely by her contact with the stage and the cinema. "Life is short and art is long," André tells her, and it is art which reveals life to Anne, giving voice to emotions and desires she cannot express. Baldly stated like this, it may sound like an arid intellectual exercise, but in fact Allio turns the film into a subtle dialectic between reality and fantasy, mask and face, where each remains separate but illumines the other. Off-stage, Anne is a spectator of reality, faced not only by a lover to whom she cannot talk but by the menacing, meaningless trivia of everyday life: a felled tree-trunk being ferried down the highway with green leaves still sprouting obstinately from it; an accident on a building site which bustles with activity and ambulances but where the leading



player seems to be mysteriously absent; a lorry looming threateningly up and then disappearing again as she drives through a tunnel. But as actress on stage, she is resonant with the melancholy of the Tchegov heroine, trapped in a stagnant world and longing to be elsewhere, and speaking lines ("In five or six years I shall be old") that are her own story. And as spectator at the cinema, she is forced by the power of make-believe to recognise herself: while watching the scene from Max Ophüls' *Le Plaisir* where the dancer collapses and has his mask removed to reveal an old face beneath, she rushes in distress from the cinema, having been brought face to face with a fiction which contains her own reality.

All the time she pretends to be her sister, Anne knows very well that she is playing a role, and it is only when she realises why she needs the role that she is able to make it her own. At first, delighted but frightened by her new image, she wanders through the streets, afraid to take a bus, enter the Métro, meet anyone, and she has to revert to her old self. But as she becomes increasingly conscious of her stagnation and of André's love (his role is also defined by the stage: in reality he is quiet, ironic, more concerned with mixing his lunchtime salad than with his feelings; on stage, where he plays Vanya, he reveals the bitterness and longing of a frustrated love), her need to effect the change dominates her timidity. And so, not only disguised as her sister but assuming her name ("Elle a le coeur sec—pas moi"), she breaks off the old affair. All that remains is for her to adapt the image to herself; and in the final sequence we see her in her new clothes but without the wig—in other words as Simone, but also as herself, her new self—embarking on a new phase of her relationship with André. As she takes a compact from the handbag she had created for her masquerade, André asks if she means to keep it. "It is mine," she says. And with it, one realises, comes a new career as well as a new life.

(New roles, of course, demand new vistas as well as new faces, and equally important is the way Allio, aided by Jean Badal's superb colour photography, supports the theme of change visually. Before Anne breaks with her lover, for instance, the flat is seen as untidy, cluttered, lived-in; afterwards it is cool, empty, inviting new experience. But that's another story which there isn't space enough to go into here.)

TOM MILNE

## LE DEPART

IT BEGINS LIKE NOTHING SO much as a Gabin picture, with meaty jazz score and stolen car hurtling at us through the night. And very rarely during the frolics that follow does *Le Départ* give any reminder that its inventive, lively, and sometimes rather glib young director is, in fact, Polish. Had this been his first film (and it is, to be fair, his first full-scale

comedy), Skolimowski's nationality would have been largely irrelevant; but the trio of films he has so far made in Poland act as an inevitable reference point, particularly as in shedding his country he also seems to have cast off both the anger and the armoury that made his previous work bristle with such satisfying complexity. As *Le Départ* romps from one piece of slapstick to the next one begins to wonder uneasily if *Barrier*, allegiances to Godard and Fellini and all, was not—as it seemed to be—a daring rejection of contemporary Polish nostalgia, but actually a step backwards into the comparative security of already well-tried themes.

In retrospect, *Walkover* certainly seems to have been less fraught than *Barrier* with the same hangovers that obsessed Munk and Wajda; while *Rysopis*, raw, introvert, and raggedly uncommunicative, begins to look remarkably like the most original of the three. The hero of *Barrier* may sit apart from the chaotic unanimity of the dance-hall where meaningless applause (fingers on glass) greets the pointless act (a man revolving on an overhead fan), just as medals used to be awarded for wartime heroism. Yet he, too, strives for a deed worth the doing, and his slide down the ski-slope on a smouldering suitcase, sabre in hand, blood-donation poster on head, takes him and us straight back to the brutal eradication of Polish hopes as described in *Ashes and Diamonds* or *Lotna*. The war is over—but at least it was a war and at least it meant action, direction and purpose. And these are qualities which Skolimowski's characters, wandering like lost souls, have never previously been able to find.

With *Le Départ*, however, the insane glory has undergone a radical change. Jean-Pierre Léaud could only be French, and neutral buildings, glassy modern showrooms, and anonymous open roads are his battleground. He does have an obsession, but it is clearly defined, unlike the *malaise* of his predecessors, and it is centred not upon nationalist desperation but upon capitalist luxury—the need to obtain a Porsche long enough for him to take part in a motor rally. Interesting, though, that in describing the story it's impossible to avoid intimations of allegory. In order to join the big race for which he is so clearly ill-equipped, the would-be champion has to assume a whole variety of guises until, having bullied, tricked and stolen his way into the contest, he abandons it in stunned incredulity at the discovery of something more important—the girl in his bed.

Opting out in favour of the happy ending is of course one of the most ancient of tales, and Skolimowski's claims for the supremacy of sex are unlikely to surprise any but the most ardent of motor-rally fans, even if they come as a shock to his own hero. What does surprise is that the Polish rebel should reach so tame a conclusion, despite the hints provided by the blonde tram-driver in *Barrier* which should have warned

(Continued on page 49)

"LE DEPART".





# London Festival Chart

Festival round-up by a group of SIGHT AND SOUND writers. Some films have already been written about in our various Festival reports; others will be reviewed when they open in London.

***** TO * INDICATE CRITICS' RATINGS ● INDICATES ANTIPATHY	PHILIP FRENCH	TOM MILNE	JAMES PRICE	DAVID ROBINSON	ELLIOTT STEIN	PHILIP STRICK	JOHN RUSSELL TAYLOR	ROBERT VAS	DAVID WILSON
Bezhin Meadow (after Eisenstein)	●	●		***		●	**	**	**
La Chinoise (Jean-Luc Godard)	*****	*****	*****	***	**	**	*****	●	*
La Collectionneuse (Eric Rohmer)	**	***		*	●	***	***		*****
Les Créatures (Agnès Varda)	**	*	**		●	*	***		●
Daisies (Vera Chytilová)		●		*	**	●			●
Le Départ (Jerzy Skolimowski)	***	**	***	***	***	***	●	*	***
Deux ou Trois Choses que je sais d'elle (Jean-Luc Godard)	***	*****	***	**	**	*****	**	*	***
Dreamers (Kirsten Stenbaek)	●	**				●			**
Elvira Madigan (Bo Widerberg)	***	***	*****		*	***	***	*	**
Far from Vietnam		**	**	*	**	**	●		***
Father (István Szabó)				**		**	**	**	***
The Feverish Years (Lazic)	***	***	**			**		**	**
Funnyman (John Korty)	**	*	**		●	**			
Heart of a Mother (Donskoi)	*	*			**		**	●	
Hugs and Kisses (Jonas Cornell)		***	***		***	**	**	*	***
Martyrs of Love (Jan Němec)	**	●	***	●		***	●	*	●
A Mother's Devotion (Donskoi)	*	●				●	*		*
Mouchette (Robert Bresson)	*****	*****	*****	***	***	*****	*****	***	*****
Portrait of Jason (Shirley Clarke)	**	**	**	*	***	*	**	●	*
Rebellion (Masaki Kobayashi)	*****	*****	*****	**	●	***	**		***
Rondo (Zvonimir Berkovic)		***	*			***	*		*****
Simon of the Desert (Buñuel)	***	*****	*****	*****		*****	*****	***	***
Switchboard Operator (Makavejev)	***	**	***	*		*	*		*
Trans-Europ Express (Robbe-Grillet)	*	**	●	*	●	*	●	●	**
Two Films by Peter Whitehead	†	●	***	*	*	**	*		*
L'Une et l'Autre (René Allio)		*****		**	●	*			***
Young Torless (Schlöndorff)	**	**		**	●	***	**	***	**





# BELLOCCHIO

Christian  
Braad  
Thomsen

**A** NEW AND EXCITING group of directors has appeared in the Italian cinema over the past four or five years. Its two most promising members are Marco Bellocchio (*I Pugni in Tasca* and *La Cina è Vicina*) and Bernardo Bertolucci (*La Commare Secca* and *Prima della Rivoluzione*). So far Bellocchio seems to be the more outstanding, and with only two feature films to his credit he is already one of the important talents in young European cinema.

Now twenty-eight, Bellocchio made *I Pugni in Tasca* when he was twenty-five—a powerful, disturbing film about the destruction of a family, and probably the most original first film since Godard's *A Bout de Souffle*. His main theme is the failure of a young epileptic—one of a family of epileptics—in his efforts to become an adult. With his appalling handicap he feels unable to cope with life, and for a time contemplates suicide. But instead he decides to kill his blind mother and semi-catatonic brother. Basing himself on some aesthetic ideal of beauty, he tries to believe that when these two sick beings are eradicated, he will be able to live a better life,

together with his sister, whom he seems to regard with vague incestuous feelings. He succeeds in both murders, but when he confides in his sister, she is shocked into semi-paralysis (real or supposed). Shortly afterwards he succumbs to a serious epileptic fit. His sister, still bed-ridden (and aware that he has contemplated killing her, too), leaves him lying on the floor, screaming and foaming. It is an enormously powerful final sequence, underscored by the aria 'Sempre libera' from Verdi's *La Traviata*.

*I Pugni in Tasca* is definitely not a case history. Bellocchio's strong temper seems to demand an extreme situation as a basis for handling the universal problem: growing up. I met Bellocchio at the Venice Festival in 1967, and asked him about his films.

\* \* \*

*Why did you choose to make your first film about an epileptic family?*

"Film sometimes needs symbols, and to me the epilepsy meant all the frustrations, all the troubles and weaknesses





"LA CINA E VICINA": GLAUCO MAURI (VITTORIO) AND ELDA TATTOLI (ELENA).

often found in the young. Some people have looked upon the film as a medical case history, and we were aware of the risk before we started making it. I tried to treat the subject as objectively and ironically as possible, and I believe paradoxically that the more I have distanced the subject through form, the more present the subject is. I believe that audiences will feel not simply that my main character is ill, but that he expresses a certain period in the life of any young man."

*You said on another occasion that *I Pagni in Tasca* is autobiographical. Where are you yourself in the film?*

"The film is not autobiographical in the sense that I recognise myself in a particular sequence or a particular character. I have tried to avoid that. On the other hand, I was raised in a bourgeois family in the same sort of provincial milieu as that described in the film. This is all part of my own experience, and my life has been a strong reaction to my bourgeois and Catholic adolescence. The boy in *I Pagni in Tasca* is destroyed because he will not accept reality. His attempt to escape reveals not only decadent but semi-fascist traits. I was brought up in a large family which was founded in the Fascist period in Italy, and though my father was not a member of the Fascist party I suppose he was emotionally linked to its policy. *I Pagni in Tasca* is autobiographical in its description of a milieu which I had to get away from in order to survive."

*Some Italian Members of Parliament protested violently against the film. What had they against it?*

"Forty-one members of the Christian Democrat Party wanted to have the film banned because they found it an offence against the Italian family, and especially against the role of the mother in the family. In Italy the family is an almost holy institution, a pillar of society, and to criticise it is considered outrageous. Italian films receive financial aid from the State, and special prizes are given to films which have been artistic but not commercial successes. The politicians tried to prevent me from getting the money."

\* \* \*

In spite of all this opposition, *I Pagni in Tasca* was awarded the 'Nastro d'Argento'—the Italian Oscar—for the most original screenplay of the year. Bellocchio's difficulties continued, however, with his next film *La Cina è Vicina*. At the 1967 Venice Festival, it received a special jury prize together with Godard's *La Chinoise*. In spite of this, the film has been banned in Italy—because it continues Bellocchio's provocative criticism of the Italian petit-bourgeois family.

The title of the film, *La Cina è Vicina*, meaning 'China is Near', is a slogan which Chinese-orientated Italian marxists paint on walls and advertising pillars. Bellocchio employs some very funny and complicated political and sexual relations between the characters as a fierce commentary on the topical political situation. And at the same time he demonstrates the connection between corruption and lack of ideology in politics, and a corresponding lack of morality and honesty in



private life. The plot of the film is too complicated to go into in detail, so a few indications will have to suffice.

At the centre are two brothers and a sister, belonging to the provincial middle class. Camillo, the youngest, has joined a small group of Chinese-orientated demonstrators, as a protest against the family. Vittorio and Elena represent the bourgeois morality, the middle class way of thinking. Nevertheless, Vittorio accepts an invitation to become a political candidate for the socialist party. The party wants a candidate who can also attract the middle class, and Vittorio, who is not a socialist, accepts the offer to satisfy his personal vanity. As a contrast to these two representatives of the bourgeois, two proletarians are introduced: Carlo, who is Vittorio's secretary, and Carlo's fiancée Giovanna, who becomes Vittorio's mistress. Things get even more complicated when the proletarian Carlo becomes the lover of bourgeois Elena. Ironically, both the proletarians become sexual partners of their employers, and because of certain pregnancies, getting rid of the proletarians proves to be less easy than expected.

The most elegant scene in the film is probably the one in which the engaged couple slip out simultaneously from two different bedrooms in the bourgeois household. In this and many other sequences, Bellocchio's social criticism recalls Buñuel, with much the same diabolically sly and artful satire. It is this tough irony, this mordant humour, that especially separates Bellocchio from the older generation of Marxist film-makers in Italy.

\* \* \*

Questioned as to which political party he belongs to, Bellocchio answers:

"I don't belong to any official party, but my sympathy and my solidarity are with the small pro-Chinese minority groups in Italy. Unfortunately they don't represent any political force or alternative to the official left wing parties, because they are not yet sufficiently organised. Nevertheless the Mao groups are very dynamic. They have been demonstrating in a really provocative way about Vietnam. They've been able to disturb the official power in Italy, but maybe they do not fully realise that the idea in which they believe cannot automatically be extended to Europe. China and Europe are so different that the Chinese cultural revolution cannot be transferred to Europe without changes. It must be adapted to European conditions. On an ideological level the Chinese groups in Europe must work much more awarely, but in concrete action I believe they already have real importance."

*Judging from La Cina è Vicina you don't seem to believe very much in the possibility of the working class changing capitalist society and creating a revolution. Don't you show the working class as more or less destroyed by the society it should change?*

"I had wanted to make *La Cina è Vicina* for a long time, and I had investigated the limits of the film. It is primarily a film which has a national meaning. I wanted to discuss the Italian political situation and to say that it is impossible for a working class party to enter an alliance with the bourgeois parties. If that happens, the working class party will inevitably lose its ideas, and this is exactly what has happened in Italy. The collaboration between the Christian Democrat Party and the socialists has resulted in the socialist party losing absolutely everything. Alliances between the working class and the bourgeois work only in favour of the establishment and must be avoided, unless the country is in exceptional circumstances such as war and resistance against a common enemy, as was the case in 1940-45."

*When I saw La Cina è Vicina, it often reminded me of Joseph Losey's The Servant, because it seems to me that you are also dealing with the subject to which Losey gives an abstract and schematic shape: the way in which the working class in a capitalist society takes over bourgeois ideals and morals. In your film Carlo and Giovanna have the same ideals as their employers: they are mostly interested in money and in having a certain position in society, and so they are unable to change anything.*

"Your comparison with Losey is very exact, apart from the fact that *The Servant* is, of course, a much better film than my own. I have always appreciated Losey's films very much,

but when I chose the subject for *La Cina è Vicina*, I realised that my approach could not be the same as his. While Losey is universal, I start from a definite and concrete situation in my own country, because I am an Italian and I want to comment on the present political situation in order to make Italians understand it directly. In a way Losey's style may be called decadent, which is not at all meant as a term of reproach. He deals closely with a number of details that are often brought into the foreground. He is deeply engaged in the symbolic role of the decor, while decor to me could be anything, even a blank wall. The characters and their problems are the only things that matter to me. You are right in saying that Carlo and Giovanna lose their strength as representatives of the working class because they accept the bourgeois ideals. But my characters are nevertheless normal people, unlike Losey's who are wicked and can only indirectly be said to represent the working class."

\* \* \*

*Since you have chosen this direct way of revealing the problems, do you in fact believe that your film may have any political importance? Do you believe it may change the attitude of the people it is addressing?*

"I don't believe that a film can change any political situation at all. Nevertheless it is necessary to make such a film. My nature forces me to provoke and criticise the people in power. It is necessary to express my disagreement with the policy of the working class parties as strongly as possible. And the reactions against my film have been as I hoped. People are angry and outraged. They have reacted as unpleasantly to me as I have been to them. And that's the way it has to be. The more powerless the artist feels, the stronger his need to provoke."

*The title of the film, China is Near, is that a hope or a fear?*

"It is, of course, a hope. However, it's difficult to say to what extent actual events are keeping the hope alive. Paradoxically it may be said that China is very far away for the people who consider China to be near, while China is just around the corner for those who think it far away. To Vittorio and Elena, China is near. They are very vulnerable in their dependence on private property and the bourgeois way of life. It is a way of life which is in retreat—you can already see its ruins."

*Which Italian film directors do you feel close to?*

"Of course I like Rossellini's first films very much, but I don't follow him any longer, because to him film has become something to do with education, and his documentary approach is very far from my own. I like many Antonioni films, and also Visconti's early films, *Ossessione*, *La Terra Trema* and *Senso*. But the sad thing about Visconti is that today he is part of the bourgeois life which he really could analyse and criticise ten years ago. His recent films are trivial and unimportant. *Ossessione* was a genuine revolutionary film; *Vaghe Stelle dell'Orsa* is decadent and reactionary. As to Fellini, his Catholic complexes push him in a direction where I can't follow at all. I am always bored after ten minutes of a Fellini film. All these older directors are working on something completely different from what I want to do with film."

"With the young generation of Italian film-makers, our problem is that we are not a solid group working on the same ideas and concepts. This is probably due to our egocentric Italian character. I like Bertolucci very much: *Prima della Rivoluzione* is a very poetic and touching film. But at the same time this subjective poetry is far from my own nature. Bertolucci's subjectivism is related to the French new wave, while I myself feel more related to Buñuel. His provocative, blasphemous way of filming appeals very much to me, though I don't feel any urge to express myself in surrealistic pictures. The wonderful thing about Buñuel is that he is an old director who even today is able to be young, and who is always faithful to himself and his ideas. Ten or fifteen years ago important things happened in Hollywood around people like Hawks, Minnelli and Aldrich, but today American film is dead. The only American director still able to describe the problems clearly is Billy Wilder."





"JE T'AIME, JE T'AIME": ALAIN RESNAIS (KNEELING), CLAUDE RICH, ANOUK FERJAC.

# IN THE PICTURE

1967

## Films of the Year

ACCIDENT \*\*\* AN ACTOR'S REVENGE \*\*\*  
ALONE ON THE PACIFIC \*\*\* BARRIER \*\*\*  
BELLE DE JOUR \*\*\* BLOW-UP \*\*\* BONNIE  
AND CLYDE \*\*\* CHIMES AT MIDNIGHT \*\*\*  
EL DORADO \*\*\* JUDEX \*\*\* THE MAN WHO  
HAD HIS HAIR CUT SHORT \*\*\* MASCULIN  
FEMININ \*\*\* PERSONA.

IN A YEAR when everyone else has a glossy eye on the colour TV market, Billy Wilder stoutly flies his pirate colours by making *Meet Whiplash Willie* in black and white and twice as sordid. The critics discover,

with *A Fistful of Dollars*, a new trend in Continental Westerns which has actually been around for a couple of years. *Ulysses*, settling down for a long run of four-letter words, brings a touch of hoi polloi to the groves of Academy. The Burtons go culture with Shakespeare, Marlowe, Losey—next stop Jean-Luc Antonioni?

Victim of the year's biggest bungle was Demy's fragile *Demoiselles de Rochefort*—dubbed, blown-up to Cinerama proportions, inevitably flopping and being replaced by the real thing after the horse had bolted. *Bonnie and Clyde* sent distributors scurrying to dust off their old gangster stock: no prizes offered for guessing what 1968 has in store. Large queue of candidates for worst film of the year, but two walk particularly tall—Preminger's *Hurry Sundown* and Cacoyannis' *Day the Fish Came Out*.

Incidental pleasures include Haskell Wexler's glittering camerawork for *In the Heat of the Night* and Kiyomi Kuroda's snowy landscapes for the Japanese *Lost Sex*. Raquel Welch (*Fathom* and *The Oldest Profession*) proves herself a delicious comedienne, and Tuesday Weld gets better and better (*Lord Love a Duck*). Patrick Magee (*The Marat/Sade*) and Robert Morse (*How to Succeed in Business . . .*) excel themselves. Paul Newman, brilliant in both *Hombre* and *Cool Hand Luke*, seems on the verge of taking over the Brando mantle. Not to be outdone, the older generation offers Catherine Lacey having a ball as the baleful sadist in *The Sorcerers*, and Oscar Homolka doing some breezy scene-stealing through *Funeral in Berlin*, *The Happening* and *Billion Dollar Brain*.

## Obituary

JANUARY: Zbigniew Cybulski, archetypal hero of the Polish post-war myth, but also a

remarkable actor; Grace Cunard, silent serial queen; Ann Sheridan, Oomph Girl of the Forties and always a pleasure to watch, whatever the movie; Jobyna Ralston, Harold Lloyd's charming partner in *The Freshman*, *Grandma's Boy*; Albert Conti, veteran actor (Stroheim's *Merry-Go-Round*) and costumer at Metro since 1940; Nikolai Okhlopkov, Russian stage director and actor; Anatole de Grunwald.

FEBRUARY: Antonio Moreno, Latin Lover of the silent days, Clara Bow's partner in the legendary, enchanting *It*; Franz Waxman, prolific Hollywood composer, winner of Academy Awards for *Sunset Boulevard* and *A Place in the Sun*; Sig Rumann, character actor loved for his shaggy-doggy blusterers; Jerry Desmond, self-effacing straight man to various comedians; Oliver Johnston, character actor whose career blossomed again after *A King in New York*; Charles Beaumont, scriptwriter with a predilection for horror and sci-fi (*Women of Outer Space*, *The Haunted Palace*, *Masque of the Red Death*); Martine Carol.

MARCH: Mischa Auer, mad Russian of innumerable films; Nelson Eddy, singing heart-throb of the Thirties; Frank Wisbar, German director who settled in Hollywood in 1939 (*Strangler of the Swamp*, *Devil Bat's Daughter*); Gordon Harker, the Cockney character actor.

APRIL: Duncan Macrae, superb Scottish comedian whose great talent never really travelled abroad, though it can be glimpsed in *Whisky Galore* and *The Kidnappers*; Nicole Berger, young heroine of *Le Blé en herbe*; Tom Conway, brother of George Sanders, and 'The Falcon' to the latter's 'Saint'; Anthony Mann; Jacques Brunius.

MAY: Claude Rains, launched as Whale's Invisible Man, and rarely turned in an indifferent performance subsequently;



George E. Stone, perennial small crook of gangster movies; Andy Clyde, garrulous ancient of the *Hopalong Cassidy* series; André Debré; Elmer Rice; G. W. Pabst.

JUNE: Dorothy Parker, supreme exponent of bitchy repartee; Reginald Denny, Hollywood's English gentleman; Spencer Tracy, the reliable; Rollie Totheroh, Chaplin's cameraman from 1915 to *A King in New York*; Bert Glennon, great cameraman of many Ford films (*Stagecoach*, *Young Mr. Lincoln*, *Wagonmaster*, etc.); Françoise Dorléac; Jayne Mansfield; Kenneth Hume.

JULY: Ned Mann, special effects man of *Thief of Bagdad*, *Ghost Goes West*; Basil Rathbone, admirable Sherlock Holmes, noted for his sneering villains; David Weisbart, Hollywood editor turned producer (*Rebel Without a Cause*, *Them, Valley of the Dolls*); Friedrich Ermler, Russian director; Vivien Leigh.

AUGUST: Jane Darwell, Ford's unforgettable Ma Joad; Anton Walbrook, after a successful return to the stage in Germany and Austria; Henry Cronjager, veteran Hollywood cameraman; Junie Astor, French actress (*Les Bas Fonds*, *L'Eternel Retour*, etc.); Paul Muni; Maurice Elvey.

SEPTEMBER: James Dunn, veteran Hollywood actor, best known for his performance as the father in *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*. OCTOBER: Nat Pendleton, portrayer of obtuse gangsters; Georges Sadoul, French film historian; Harold Huth, star of British silents, later producer (*Trials of Oscar Wilde*) and director.

NOVEMBER: Charles Bickford, Hollywood stalwart; Fred Majdalany, military historian and film critic; June Thorburn.

## The Anniversary

PREDICTABLY the first week in November, 1967—the 50th anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution—exposed us to more old actuality film of Russia during the great upheavals than at any time in the last half-century. The main impression that was left was how comprehensive a job Esther Shub must have done in the Twenties when she raked every possible source of old movie films for her three pioneer compilations, *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* (1927), *The Great Road* (1927) and *The Russia of Nikolai II and Lev Tolstoy* (1928). In the succeeding four decades additional material unearthed even by such indefatigable researchers as the Thorndikes (*The Russian Miracle*) has been only marginal.

Of the various anniversary productions, the one with most unfamiliar material was Frédéric Rossif's *The October Revolution*. Rossif, one gathered from *Mourir à Madrid*, has a way with archivists. Among the material I do not recall seeing before, he has fairly extensive shots of the buxom, even pretty soldiers of the women's regiment that was set so hopelessly to the defence of the Winter Palace in the fateful days of October; a marvellously revealing shot of Kerensky in front of the Palace, his truculent smile quite failing to conceal the strain and uncertainty; crafty little Kornilov at the very moment when he thought he might be Russia's leader. More striking are scenes of the famine winters (the film carries the story on into the Twenties) and marvellous film of the *bezprizorni*, the orphans of the civil war and famine who formed themselves into wandering, marauding bands: wild, eager, frightening, hungry little faces glittering out of tangles of hair and bundles of rag.

In other respects Rossif's film is less satisfying than his Spanish one. He is less scrupulous about his material (not acknowledging, for instance, material from fiction films such as *October*); less successful in marrying the vigorous crudity of ancient actuality with his own new, somewhat 'aesthetic' shooting; misguided in his use of sickly rich orchestrations and choral arrangements as musical background. The commentary too takes a rather loose view of history, notably in its relation of the heroic days of Soviet art to NEP. And there is an odd slip about Lenin being *assassinated* (though there was, it is true, an attempt).

The BBC's *The World Turned Upside Down* (produced by Malcolm Brown and Patricia Meehan), though it did not discover so many treasures, seemed to have a firmer grasp both on history and on its own documents. Patrick O'Donovan's commentary (read by Leo McKern) tended to heap rather too much blame on poor silly home-loving Nicholas; and pulled you up short by sweeping Kerensky off as "this ineffectual man" (ineffective in October, maybe; but not ineffectual to have achieved the power he wielded at 37). The programme took a good deal of care (as surprisingly few compilation films do) to identify the contents of every shot; and, in using the inevitable Winter Palace sequence from *October*, to evaluate the myth in its relation to reality.

Granada's much publicised Anglo-Soviet collaboration, *Ten Days That Shook the World* (produced by Norman Swallow and Grigori Alexandrov) was fairly disastrous. The title had seemed, in advance, presumptuous. In the event, when large sections of the film turned out to be chunks of Eisenstein's *October*, shown at sound speed, unstretched, it was perhaps more understandable. Here there was no attempt at evaluating feature film material. The apparently conscientious captioning of fiction material (including long extracts from *Strike*) was positively deluding: the convention was inconsistently applied, so that other feature extracts, shown without identification, invited us to give them the belief due to authentic documents. Even in

the use of actuality material the film was less than responsible: I am pretty certain that material used to illustrate pre-revolutionary conditions of poverty actually dated from the post-revolution famines. In any case, despite the apparent cooperation of Soviet archives, there was disappointingly little fresh material (I question the authenticity of the footage offered as showing the massacre of Bloody Sunday, which appeared to come from yet another unacknowledged feature film). Even authentic material lost value from being projected at sound speed—a carelessness for which there is no longer any excuse.

The Granada programme introduced survivors of Revolutionary days—a lady who had known Lenin in London, the Aurora's commissar and so on. And this emphasised the great lost opportunity of all the films. Why had no one troubled to interview the Potemkin sailor who lives in Dublin? (Granada, incidentally, managed to tell the story of 1905 without even mentioning the Potemkin mutiny.) Shulgin is still alive and magnificent. Kerensky and Prince Yussupov (who was still living when most of the films were in production) have never been reticent about their part in things. And there must be others more centrally concerned than that chatterbox wife of Kerensky's who has taken so much limelight.

Inevitably the Soviet Union itself put on the best show, with the Red Square parade—period uniforms and vehicles and lunatic new weapons: cannons on the Kremlin battlements, fireworks, flowers, children, the lot—which the BBC televised on the morning of the great day. One of the Moscow commentators was a Russian of charm and evident patriotic pride. Cliff Michelmore asked him if he did not find it rather boring to see all these people marching by. He was politely rebuked for his fatuity: "You must not think that the Soviet Union is Luxembourg or Lichtenstein." Which, of course, it is not.

DAVID ROBINSON

## The Big Silence

FOR HOLLYWOOD, the Vietnam war is stuff too hot to handle. Glamourland, which stood up and let itself be counted at the sound of the first clarions of other wars, is sitting this one out. The otherwise eloquent 'underground' is also remaining silent. It continues to pour out narcissistic pornography and psychedelic hedonism, but no full-length feature protesting the war head-on or obliquely has been made.

*The Green Berets*, which finished shooting in November, is the first movie about Vietnam; a curious state of affairs because Hollywood turned out hundreds of World War II and Korean war films, and still does. The explanation is obvious, of course. In the face of polls showing Americans repeatedly rejecting any immediate pull-out but opposing the war just about as emphatically, studios are reluctant to get caught in any ideological crossfire. "Besides," argued a studio production chief, "the war may be over before we get a film into any cinema."

Produced and co-directed (with Mervyn LeRoy) by John Wayne, who also plays the hero, *The Green Berets* was shot in the Georgia savanna 150 miles south of Atlanta, the training base for anti-guerrilla fighting and subversive warfare, and at the U.S. Marine Corps' Fort Benning. While siding with the hawks, the picture nevertheless fails to go all the way in backing the present Washington position. Wayne, David

JOHN WAYNE, DIRECTOR AND STAR OF "THE GREEN BERETS".





Janssen, Jim Hutton, Aldo Ray and the rest of the cast prudently play out a drama taking place about 1963, when the role of the U.S. forces was limited to 'advising' the Saigon regime's army.

"I've been to Vietnam and talked to the men there," says Wayne, "and I don't have the slightest doubt about the correctness of what we are doing." In a way the story could be about any war, he added. "It's about this war, but it's also about this special kind of soldier."

"It turned out to be a lot of ad lib," Janssen said on his return from the location. "The dialogue of this war is difficult for a writer to know. We had members of the real Green Berets surrounding us and supplying authenticity. Wayne wanted this to be a significant film—as well as a picture people want to see."

On the peace forces' side, nothing has been done. One anti-war project made the round of the studios last year: Stirling Silliphant's *Groundswell*, imagining Vietcongs infiltrating the Pentagon in the disguise of Japanese students. Without necessarily being worthy of the best Mack Sennett, the screenplay imagines a hilarious ending of sorts with the Vietcong getting lost in a maze of corridors until an obliging major directs them towards the war room.

Samuel Fuller is planning a Vietnam film with strong anti-war overtones, but it seems unlikely that *The Rifle* can reach any screens in less than a year. Also, as Cornel Wilde discovered with *Beach Red*, the Defense Department will refuse cooperation on any blatant pacifist film. *Newsweek* has underlined how even American correspondents in Saigon are under pressure to file optimistic stories; and as the presidential election campaign gets nearer, collaboration on any anti-Establishment movie is unlikely. And how can you make a war movie without showing war—planes, tanks, machine-guns, armies in up-to-date uniforms, and, as Janssen said, contemporary parlance?

So unless Fuller's project takes place in the unique decor of a foxhole or in a behind-the-front location, it seems unlikely he will be able to make it. Also in this category must fall *The New Legions*, a novel by former Green Beret Donald Duncan, now 'military' editor for *Ramparts*, which has been rumoured as a screen project. This is a professional soldier's book after his eighteen months in Vietnam, an emotional statement against war.

That the Vietnam conflict is unpopular in Hollywood is shown in the difficulty the armed forces are having in recruiting entertainers for Vietnam tours; and, on the other side of the ideological coin, in the fact that only a few have spoken against the war.

Charlton Heston and Marlon Brando, the two most outspoken champions of left-of-centre causes, have remained silent, but George C. Scott has published a Vietnam diary critical of the war, John Cassavetes has expressed his opposition on television, and that man from UNCLE, Robert Vaughn, has addressed anti-war college rallies. Meanwhile, the Rally Round the Flag faction is also having difficulties gaining popularity. The troop entertainment tours have received only half-hearted backing, and it is constantly the same personalities who fly to Saigon with USO, the organisation responsible for troop entertainment during World War II and Korea, demotivated with publicity fanfare a year ago.

Meanwhile, the New York festival screened a Hanoi propaganda film, and



MICKY ROONEY IN "THE EXTRAORDINARY SEAMAN", WORLD WAR TWO COMEDY DIRECTED BY JOHN FRANKENHEIMER.

NBC aired on network time an East German production, some thirty minutes of interviews with U.S. prisoners of war in Hanoi. The East German team shot 75,000 feet of black-and-white film in Hanoi last June, and NBC paid 'more than \$10,000' for the U.S. rights.

War-is-hell pictures are all over American screens this winter, beginning with Richard Lester's *How I Won the War*. The war in question is of course World War II, as it is in Cornel Wilde's *Beach Red*. A quarter century is a safe distance for criticism.

AXEL MADSEN

## The Underground Surfaces

IT WAS ABOUT three years ago that Jonas Mekas confided to me that some day he was going to get his hands on a real Times Square movie theatre for his underground film showings. Yes, yes, I remember myself saying, I'm sure you will, some day. Well, it hasn't taken twenty years, nor yet ten, but just three: in October, 1967 the Film-Makers Cooperative opened its 42nd Street movie theatre with the premiere of Shirley Clarke's new film *Portrait of Jason*.

During the past year, the underground has broken through the pay dirt to the surface. That favourite subject of the underground, sex, has of course had a little something to do with it. It was Kenneth Anger's *Scorpio Rising* which first broke through into a commercial cinema. One might have predicted such a success had one ever been

able to conceive of such a film getting past the censors. But now, of course, there are no censors any more, just the police; and it would seem that the Lindsay administration has given orders not to harass the avant-garde. Without this permissive climate, *Scorpio* could never have been shown, nor could Warhol's *The Chelsea Girls* have achieved its long runs at two commercial theatres. For it was *The Chelsea Girls* that really opened the gates to the underground.

It certainly worked for Warhol, for since *The Chelsea Girls* he has had several long-running films in various movie theatres round Times Square. For *My Hustler*, an old legitimate theatre was converted. After its longish run it actually transferred to a newly built 'Adult 16 mm. movie theatre' to make room for *I, A Man*, Warhol's answer to the Danish sex hit *I, A Woman*. Then came *Bike Boy*, and the end is not in sight. That the success of these films depended on the greater public's identification of 'underground' with 'sex' can be seen by a surprisingly sophisticated advertising campaign launched by one of the old-time exploitation houses for their latest offering. "At last," the advertisements proclaimed, "the underground treatment applied to a fully plotted film." One knew exactly what they meant, and this, too, is a measure of the degree to which the underground is an accepted part of the New York scene.

But success brings with it problems, and now that Mekas has opened his 42nd Street showcase, he finds himself obliged by



commercial pressures to reserve it for sure-fire hits like Miss Clarke's film. So he has now revamped his old set-up, and has two other theatres going: one way down town will follow the old 'open house' system of the Film-Makers Cooperative: it will show more or less anything that is sent in, regardless of 'quality'. The other, further up town in Greenwich Village, will be a kind of middle-of-the-road repertory theatre of the underground, showing the (already!) established classics of the movement.

It seems to me, on reflection, that many film-makers will benefit greatly from these multiple screenings. At least Warhol seems to have done so already: in many ways, his films are getting better and better. For as Godard has always maintained, the best way for an artist to make better movies is to make more movies. Waiting several years between pictures does seem to have brought out the worst in many directors, and just as the need to fill all those movie theatres kept the big studios in Hollywood going through the Twenties and Thirties, forcing them to develop new talents, so perhaps the various underground palaces will provide the same kind of forcing-ground.

RICHARD ROUD

## Cambridge Festival

WHAT ABOUT A competitive film festival in Britain? Now may be a bad time to ask anyone to spend money, but the surprising success of the Cambridge Animation Festival (it lasted for four days, November 16-19) suggests that here is a little corner that could grow. Of course there are other and older cartoon festivals; the latest at Montreal last summer conveniently garnered much of what was shown at Cambridge. But Montreal is a long way away. So is Mamia, and it's not exactly the resort to draw people from the West, for all its Black Sea sunshine. Annecy Festival, which alternates with Mamia, is, according to habitués, not what it once was.

So what about Cambridge? Much of the credit for last November's effort must go to Dick Arnall, who also set in motion the first Cambridge animation festival a couple of years ago. This time quite rightly there were more films and less chat, but such public discussions as took place (with the Yugoslav delegation from Zagreb, for instance) were enthusiastic and even informative. In a sense Zagreb furnished the retrospective, with two splendid programmes spanning their output of the last eleven years. There was also what amounted to an Alexeieff retrospective, which was very well received; a session on Animation and Education; and the première of Walerian Borowczyk's inaccessible feature-length animated film for adults, *Théâtre de Monsieur et Madame Kabal*.

Under the portmanteau heading 'Best of '66 '67' there were four programmes which gave an admirably full impression of most of the things now being done in the field of entertainment cartoon. They included such small masterpieces as René Jodoin's *Notes on a Triangle*, Campani's *Boomerang*, Jimmy Murakami's *Breath*, Kijowicz's *Cages*, Khitzuk's *A Lion's Holiday*. Part of one programme was given over to work of the Mouvart Group, who insist that the animated film is a total art form and claim, dubiously I think, that the static canvas does not correspond to our way of seeing. Leonardo, they say, if he were alive, would animate his paintings. Well, they go as far as any animators to explore the abstract

cartoon—but there is still a good deal further to go.

On this showing, Cambridge just *might* become the animators' Mecca. If a festival did become established, it would do much good for the short film cause as a whole in this country, and interested parties might care to chip in. But it would be unwise to finance a third Cambridge festival on a shoestring: amateurism has so far been justified, but a more permanent arrangement would need more professional organisation, better projection, and a more intelligible festival handbook. This may be carping, but if we are to have an international festival we have got to think in terms of prizes and proper festival paraphernalia. It would be disastrous if it went off at half-cock.

IAN WRIGHT

## Satyajit Ray and the Alien

BOTH AS A film-maker and a person, Satyajit Ray seems so far removed from science fiction that Indians were as intrigued as the rest of the world when news leaked out that Ray was going to shoot a science fiction film in Calcutta with Peter Sellers playing an Indian. But, as with all his films, Ray has planned every step with calm deliberation and apparent enjoyment. To my questions—Why Peter Sellers? Will science fiction be box-office in India? Could he please tell me a little about the plot?—Ray gave answers as lucid as they are logical. But I shall respect his wish not to give away too much of the plot, since he does not start shooting for a year. I shall quote his own words on *The Alien*:

1). "I have three main reasons for casting Peter Sellers. a) My great admiration for him: it's good to work with a real virtuoso once in a while. b) I thought it would be fun to see him playing an Indian in an Indian film, and I thought the idea would intrigue

Sellers too (I was right). c) *The Alien* needs top technical quality, with special effects in colour, etc. Which meant processing abroad—which meant bigger cost—which called for a wider market to bring back that cost—which meant British/American distribution to exploit that market—which called for a big name in the cast to interest the distribution company—which meant Sellers.

2). "*The Alien* is not 100 per cent science fiction, because the emphasis is really more on the human aspect, on human reactions to an SF situation, which is an SF situation only towards the end. Before that, it is more a religious-superstitious situation. With more than half of the dialogue in English, *The Alien* is not aimed at the wider Indian market. I expect it will play on the circuit that foreign (American/British) films play, with the Bengali bits subtitled in English (same procedure for G.B. and U.S.A.)."

3). The plot centres on "an unidentified spaceship descending silently and unnoticed by anyone in a lotus pond on the outskirts of a small Bengali village. The village has its contingent of peasants, middle-class inhabitants, a school, post-office, etc." A young couple from Calcutta is also on a visit, the husband being a journalist who is doing an on-the-spot study for a series of articles on the Changing Face of the Village. Other characters are an American engineer, and the Marwari industrialist (Peter Sellers) who has engaged him to sink a well. "The Alien is supremely intelligent, endowed with super-powers, but puckish in its ways," says Ray. "When he leaves, the human beings, rich and poor, white and brown, primitive and sophisticated, are all in an identical state of stupefied helplessness."

Satyajit Ray has written his own screenplay for *The Alien*; and he will also be writing the music.

AMITA MALIK

LEO McKERN, ROBERT HARRIS AND ROBIN PHILLIPS IN JOHN KRISH'S FILM OF "DECLINE AND FALL".







"STALAG 17": BILLY WILDER AND OTTO PREMINGER.

# Meet whiplash Wilder

Charles Higham

**A**LMOST ALONE AMONG American directors, Billy Wilder has succeeded in hanging on, through Hollywood's long years of compromise, of an increasingly desperate wooing of the audience, to a corrosive misanthropy, a disenchanted view of the public. If his most recent comedies have occasionally sugared the pill, they have still come out with a philosophy not calculated to please the nursing mothers of Podunk. Relaxed in Californian T-shirt and casual slacks, his neatly impersonal beige-and-brown office at Mirisch/UA a far cry from the clutter of Walter Matthau's in *Meet Whiplash Willie*, Wilder doesn't immediately convey the harsh directness of his pictures. And indeed, despite nervous warnings from the publicity men ("He can't sit still," one told me, "for long enough to get five minutes on to tape"), he proved surprisingly genial and relaxed during the two-hour interview. Wilder on his best behaviour, then: but every now and again the impatient, brilliant mind, coldly disillusioned and tough, showed in its clearest colours.

Wilder began by talking about his impatience with arty effects: "I don't like the audience to be aware of camera tricks. Suddenly you're shooting a man crossing a street and you take him from the ninth storey of a building, and you begin to think in the stalls: 'There must be an FBI man looking down from up there,' and instead it's just an arty cameraman. Why shoot a scene from a bird's eye view, or a bug's? I guess they call that kind of thing 'stylish' or 'beautifully conceived'. 'What an eye,' they say, 'shooting stuff through parking meters!' It's all done to astonish the bourgeois, to amaze the middle-class critic. Actually it's nothing but the work of the

kind of people who are impressed by the fancy set-ups you get in TV commercials: you know, a man with his feet on a desk and you see the soles of his feet covering nine-tenths of the screen and in between the two shoes you see a little bit of his face. What's the point?"

*You are said to have had many casting difficulties with your pictures. True?*

It was very hard to get Stanwyck and MacMurray for *Double Indemnity*. They just didn't like the idea of playing murderers; he in particular was afraid of what it could do to his image. And Milland didn't normally play drunks, but playing a drunk wasn't quite as dangerous as playing a killer. We even considered casting George Raft for the MacMurray part in *Double Indemnity*, and eleven actors turned it down. I wanted Jose Ferrer to play the drunk in *Lost Weekend*; I had seen him as Iago to Paul Robeson's Othello, and he was superb. But Paramount told me to forget it: Buddy de Silva said that if the drunk wasn't an extremely attractive man, who apart from being a drunk could have been a hell of a nice guy, then audiences wouldn't go for it.

*What are your methods of direction?*

I don't rehearse at all. The actors forget what we were rehearsing, I forget how I rehearsed it, absolutely impossible. I have one hour of run-through before I start the shooting, sit around with the crew and the cast and discuss the sequence ahead of us each new day, what is to be noticed, where I'm going to do this and that. There's no such thing as my coming on the set in the morning with a piece of chalk and drawing little blueprints and saying: 'He will move three steps and take the cigarette out and now he will sit on the couch.' We just fool around with ideas until the scene comes to life for all of us, then I talk to the cameraman and the cutter separately about chopping the whole thing up into separate shots. Then I go in and I might do twenty takes until it's exactly right.

*How have your collaborations worked with Charles Brackett and I. A. L. Diamond?*

We would sit in one room and talk out the whole script for weeks, you couldn't even separate lines of dialogue. Once or twice the other writer came up with an outstanding line on his own—Diamond's 'Nobody's perfect' at the end of *Some Like It Hot*, for instance.

*Going back to the beginnings, could you fix finally the 'degree of responsibility' on People on Sunday?*

Oh, that was more *nouvelle vague* than a hippy picture! We were all dilettantes then. Robert Siodmak was the director for a very simple reason: when kids play football on a meadow the one who owns the football is the captain. He owned the camera, and he got the money from an uncle—five thousand marks. I was the writer and carried the camera. Shuftan was the cameraman, and the only pro on the picture. Ulmer worked as Siodmak's assistant director and Zinnemann was Shuftan's assistant.

*What about your isolated French film, made on the way to Hollywood, Mauvaise Graine?*

I stopped in Paris in 1933, having left Germany immediately after the Reichstag fire; I'd written dozens of scripts at UFA, including *Emil and the Detectives*. *Mauvaise Graine*, no connection with the later *Bad Seed*, was a story of kids, a gang of automobile thieves in Paris. Danielle Darrieux was the star, she played the sister of one of the boys. We shot the picture on location in Paris and Marseilles, on a shoestring, with money put in by eight people. We didn't use a single sound stage, most of the interiors were shot in a converted garage, and even the living-room scenes were shot in it. We did the automobile chases without transparencies, live, on the streets, at high speed, and it was very exhausting.

*How did you get to Hollywood?*

I sold a story to Columbia—*Pam-Pam*, about a gang of counterfeiters who live in an abandoned theatre. It's all boarded up, and they live in it and make their phoney money, and sleep in the boxes, using the rain machine for a shower. The film was never made but it took me to the United States via Mexico. I began writing original stories in Hollywood, and I kind of starved for a little bit. I shared a room with Peter Lorre, and we lived on a can of soup a day.





BILLY WILDER ON SET. ABOVE: WITH RITA JOHNSON, RAY MILLAND AND GINGER ROGERS ON "THE MAJOR AND THE MINOR". CENTRE: "SUNSET BOULEVARD"; CECIL B. DE MILLE AND GLORIA SWANSON IN THE PARAMOUNT STUDIO SEQUENCE. BELOW: WILDER WITH RICHARD BENEDICT, THE MAN TRAPPED IN THE CAVE IN "ACE IN THE HOLE".

When you worked for Paramount, were there many stories they rejected?

Oh, yes. For instance, they wouldn't take on the idea of *Sunset Boulevard*, which I put to them in the late Thirties, or of *The Apartment*. They just didn't understand these themes, they weren't ready for them at the time.

What was the creative atmosphere like at Paramount?

It was absolutely marvellous. You just walked across the lot and there they were: von Sternberg, Dietrich, Gary Cooper, Leo McCarey, Lubitsch. We made pictures then, we didn't make deals. Today we spend 80 per cent of the time making deals and 20 per cent making pictures.

How did you get your first directorial assignment on *The Major and the Minor*?

I had made myself rather unpopular as a writer at Paramount because I would come on the set and they would chase me off it. I was always trying to put them right on misinterpretations. I was known as The Terror: they would say, 'Keep Wilder away from us, he's always raising hell, he wants everything done his way.' The fact is that very few directors know how to 'read', how to interpret dialogue correctly, and they are too proud to ask if they don't understand a particular line. So lines tend to get thrown away. Arthur Hornblow, for whom Brackett and I had written a few pictures, saw my point and thought I had better direct my own scripts. I think the studio's attitude was, 'Let Wilder break his neck, he'll soon come back as a writer only, and be a good boy.' But I was careful. I didn't go out to make a so-called 'artistic' success, I went out to make a commercial picture I wouldn't be ashamed of. My agent, Leland Hayward, went brazenly up to Ginger Rogers, who was then something, she had just won the Academy Award for *Kitty Foyle*, and sold her on me as a director. And the picture worked well.

What was von Stroheim like to work with on *Five Graves to Cairo*?

He was fascinating, *le grand seigneur* at all times. There was something very noble about him, although he wasn't a 'von' at all, his accent belonged to one of the rougher suburbs of Vienna.

Of course, he influenced me greatly as a director: I always think of my style as a curious cross between Lubitsch and Stroheim. When I first saw him at the wardrobe tests for his role as Rommel, I clicked my heels and said: 'Isn't it ridiculous, little me directing you? You were always ten years ahead of your time.' And he replied, 'Twenty.' He was full of interesting ideas. His make-up, for instance: it was black on the face and white on his head above the line of the cap—you see, he pointed out that Rommel was always in the sun, and when he took his cap off there would be no colour in the skin underneath. And he wanted two cameras slung round his neck, and they had to be German; he even insisted on having film in them. He said, 'The audience will sense if the films aren't inside, they'll feel that they are merely props.' Of course, he contributed ideas to *Sunset Boulevard* as well: the idea that the butler writes all the fan mail for Norma Desmond, for instance. But then he could go too far. He said, 'Let me do a scene where I am washing and pressing my former wife Norma Desmond's panties. Please, I can do something with it.' I said, 'Yes, I know you can, but I don't want to shoot it.'

How did you get that perfect Los Angeles look in *Double Indemnity*?

We used as many locations as possible—they were doing mostly studio work for backgrounds at Paramount in those days, but we changed the tradition. I used the railroad station, parts of downtown, and Los Feliz Boulevard, where the house stood that Stanwyck lived in. The insurance office was a copy of the old Paramount offices in New York. And I'd go in and kind of dirty up the sets a little to make them look worn. I'd take all the white out of everything. I had John F. Seitz, the cameraman who had worked with Rex Ingram and Rudolph Valentino, with me on the picture, and he helped me a great deal. I wanted that look that Californian houses get, with the sun streaming through the shutters and showing the dust. You couldn't photograph that, so Seitz made some silver shreds for me and they photographed like motes in sunbeams. I like



that kind of realism. Everything in Hollywood always looks like the late Jayne Mansfield's bedroom, and it's ridiculous.

*Didn't the film end differently in the original version?*

Yes. We shot the execution of Fred MacMurray, a complete duplication of a gas chamber scene in San Quentin running a reel, the pellets dropping, the whole thing done with the utmost care, and a warden acting as technical adviser.

*Again, in The Lost Weekend, you went out for a total realism...*

We used the exterior of Bellevue Hospital in New York and copied the alcoholic ward down to the last detail. Harry and Joe's Bar was a pastiche of 52nd Street dives, and Sam's Bar is P. J. Clark's on 55th Street, the bar where Charles Jackson actually drank. Three houses down from there between Second and Third we shot the apartment building where he lived with his brother, and we copied the apartment exactly. We had a job persuading the studio to do the picture. I bought the book at a stall while changing trains with Leland Hayward in Chicago on our way to New York and immediately cabled Brackett, but at first Paramount were unwilling. They couldn't see it our way because up to then drunks had been fit subjects only for comedy. But finally, of course, they came round.

*Did Sunset Boulevard cause a stir on its first showings in Hollywood?*

I remember there was a big preview in the projection room at Paramount. I've never seen so many prominent people at once—the word was out that this was a stunner, you see. After the picture ended there were violent reactions, from excitement to pure horror. I remember Barbara Stanwyck kneeling down in front of Miss Swanson and kissing the hem of her garment in one of those ridiculous adulation things, and Louis B. Mayer shaking his fist saying, 'We should horsewhip this Wilder, we should throw him out of this town, he has brought disgrace on the town that is feeding him!' I don't know what he was talking about, I don't know what the hell was so anti-Hollywood in that picture. He lived in a kind of dream world, unfortunately.

*Why did you decide to have the whole picture narrated by, as it were, the gigolo writer Joe Gillis's ghost?*

We originally had a weird kind of framing sequence containing some of the best material I've ever shot, but when we previewed the picture in Chicago and in the suburbs of New York people just screamed with laughter, so we cut it. We showed the corpse of a man being brought to the morgue in downtown Los Angeles, where we actually did much of the shooting. And in that section of the morgue when he arrives there are eight bodies—a woman, an elderly man, a young boy and so on. And the corpses tell each other events leading up to their deaths. The boy drowned, the old man had retired and had a little avocado grove in Tarzana here, and had a heart attack. And so on. And now Holden tells the story, but by the time the corpse has been labelled and the tag tied to the big toe the audience is helpless in the aisles. A pity. The opening as we finally shot it wasn't logical but it was riveting, and as long as something is riveting, they will swallow it.

*Where was the Norma Desmond house?*

On Wilshire and Crenshaw. It has been torn down now and replaced by Tidewater Oil. It belonged to the richest man in the world, Paul Getty. His wife let us use the house provided we put the pool in. We also put the rats in. Ugh.

*What made you choose the specific players for the waxworks' card game?*

We wanted more famous silent stars, but they wouldn't agree. But we didn't do too badly, we had Buster Keaton, Anna Q. Nilsson—nobody remembered her but she kind of looked right—and Jesus Christ, H. B. Warner.

*Why was Ace in the Hole such a box-office flop?*

Actually, it did well in Europe but not here, perhaps because Americans expected a cocktail and felt I was giving them a shot of vinegar instead. I read those reviews that said, 'How cynical can a director be? How could a newspaperman possibly behave like Chuck Tatum?' And the day I read the

reviews I was on Wilshire Boulevard and I was feeling very downhearted, and somebody was run over by a car right in front of me. And a news cameraman came and took the picture. And I said to him, 'Come on, let's help this man, he's dying.' And he said, 'Not me, boy. I've got to get my picture in.' And off he went. When we showed the carnival moving in and the songs being composed, and the hot dogs being sold, it was all factual, based on the facts of the original man in the cave case of Floyd Collins in the Twenties. But people just don't want to see this in a film, the way we really are. And maybe they're right, maybe one shouldn't try to get people out of a rut. Maybe I was wrong to do that.

*What was it like directing another director, Otto Preminger, in Stalag 17?*

He never could remember his lines. He told me that every time he fluffed he would send me a jar of caviar. I soon had shelves full of them.

*You've adapted several works from the stage in recent years—do you like doing that as much as creating originally for the screen?*

Directors are always getting Oscars for things like that, but no, I really don't like them, or like doing them. To give an Academy Award to a man who adapts a play is like giving the removalists who took Michelangelo's Pietà from the Vatican to the New York World's Fair a first award in sculpture. *Witness for the Prosecution* I did like, though; Marlene urged me to make the picture because she wanted to play it, and if I agreed to direct it she would have a better chance of getting the part.

*Did Spirit of St. Louis present formidable difficulties?*

Yes indeed. We had to cover such a vast area—and we had to fly in the actual replica of the plane. If something went wrong with Stewart's performance we had to land the thing at a nearby airfield and explain to him because you couldn't do it in the air. And by then your day had gone, the weather didn't match. And I'm not an outdoor man: I've never done a Western. I think I should confine myself to bedrooms, maybe. I was saying the other day, 'I'm doing a picture where the boss is chasing the secretary round the desk. But this time I'm going to have Andrew Marton shoot the chase sequence.'

*Some Like It Hot rather disappointed box-office expectations, didn't it?*

Yes, it was far ahead of its time. If we made it today it would be a huge success. We had a problem persuading Tony Curtis to get into women's clothing, but Jack Lemmon was an all-out clown and extrovert and enjoyed the whole thing enormously. Marilyn Monroe was sensitive and very difficult. She tried hard, but you had to wait for her to come through, to start rolling, and then her tiny kind of inhibition disappeared and after that she was phenomenal, one of the great comediennes. The metabolism had to be right with her, and if it was right, she was a marvellous thing to direct.

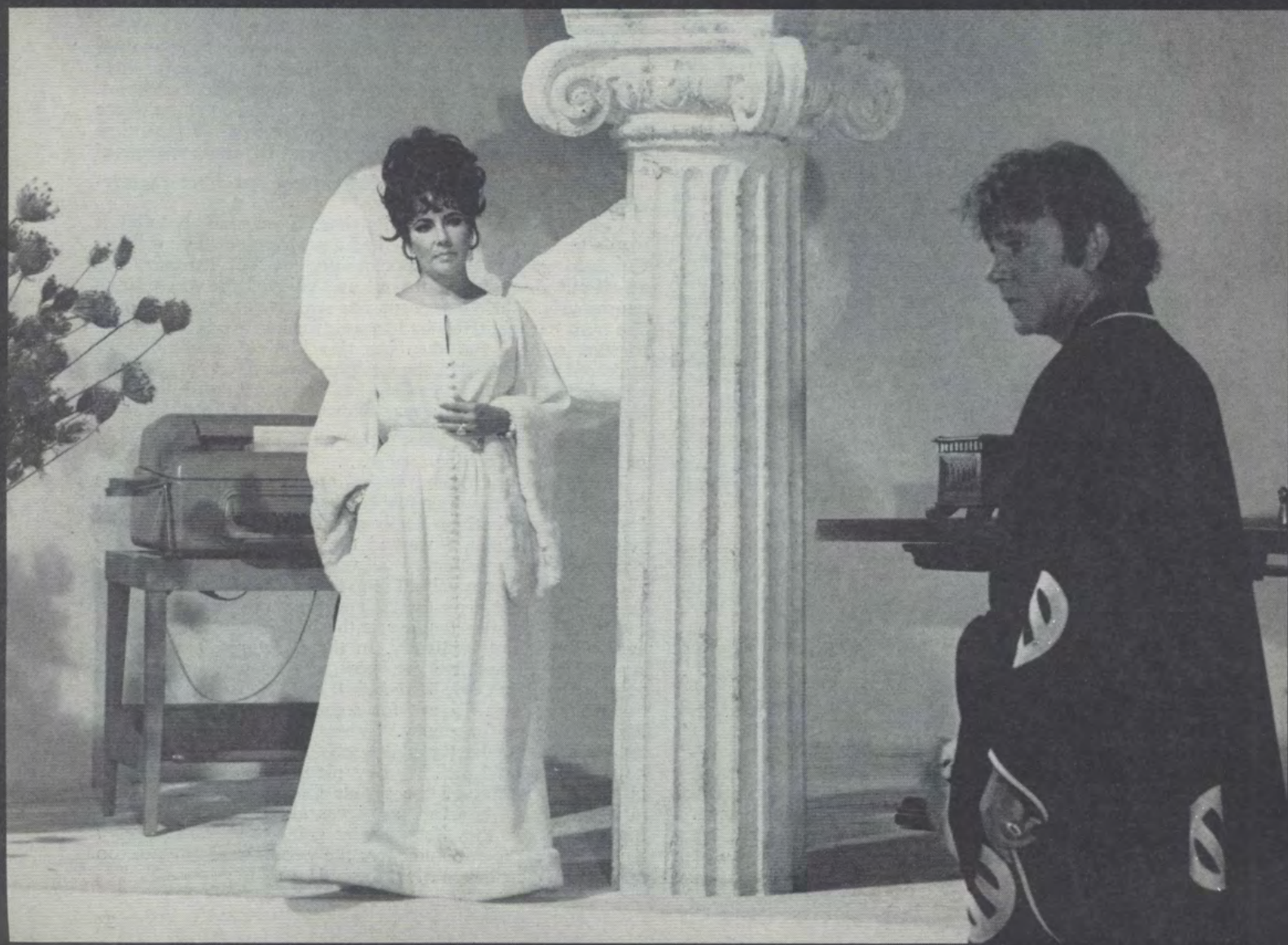
*The Apartment and Meet Whiplash Willie seem to indicate a return to a more personal style...*

That's true, and of course they aren't really comedies. We sugar-coated them with a few laughs here and there, but what I wanted to say in them finally was, human beings are human beings. Once again, I wanted the starkest realism. In *The Apartment*, the apartment itself was small, we took the white out, and the office was built in exact perspective; we had tiny desks at the back with dwarfs and then tinier ones still with cut-outs. Alexander Trauner is the best in the business and he worked it out brilliantly. In these pictures, I wanted to say: 'How corrupt we are, how money mad we are.' As someone says in *Meet Whiplash Willie*, 'People will do anything for money. Except for some people. They will do almost anything for money.' I guess that's the theme of all my pictures. Maybe my philosophy is cynical, but I have to be true to what I feel. My next picture is sure to be in bad taste, and I'm hoping the people financing me don't blow all the money. After all, my ideas about people aren't so brand new, are they, that they're going to shock anybody? Say a little bit to rub audiences the wrong way, but not too much, and you haven't lost them. Have you?



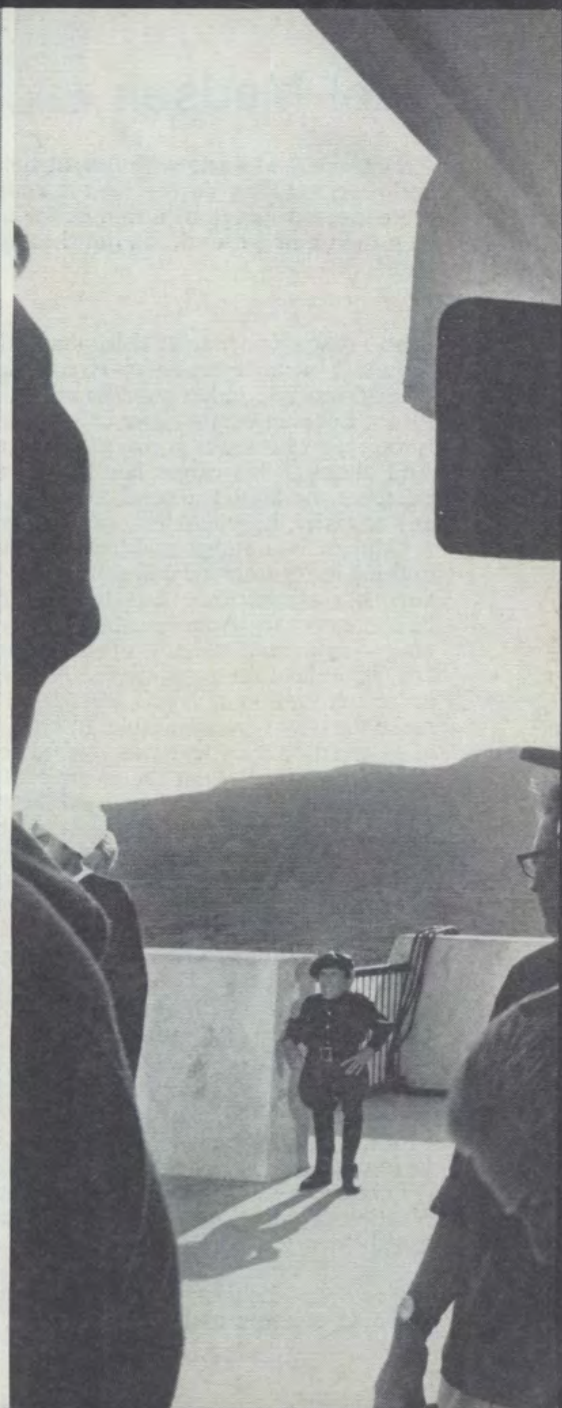


# GO FORTH





Elizabeth Taylor, as the rich Mrs. Goforth, Richard Burton and James Dunn (below, right) in scenes from Joseph Losey's new film. Script by Tennessee Williams; camerawork by Douglas Slocombe; filmed on location in Sardinia.





# Who's afraid of Alfred Hitchcock?

## Axel Madsen

An interview of sorts with Ernest Lehman, a slim and reserved New Yorker, who is as far away from the expected image of a film writer and producer as a man can get and still get through the studio gates.

**T**O ATTACK THE 'auteur theory' at a time when everybody—and I mean *everybody*—is coming around to the filmmakers' side, takes courage or a lot of inside knowledge. Ernest Lehman would never call himself courageous since he is the type who looks at every project as a potential disaster. And although his career has been a model of peaceful co-existence, he knows a good many of the agonies (are there any ecstasies, he would ask) of film-making.

Lehman is a rangy middleweight in his mid-forties, and nothing in his reserved and sometimes supine manner allows anyone to suspect that he is the most formidable screenwriter in contemporary American film. The envious—and they are many—call him a 'window opener' because he gets more than 100,000 dollars for adapting *The Sound of Music*, and because his screen version of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* doesn't make the play unrecognisable. In fact it looks as if his rewrite of Edward Albee's text was limited to opening a couple of windows, writer jargon for laying part of the action outside a one-set decor. His admirers, and they are limited to industry insiders because Lehman is unknown to any public, feel *Sabrina* and *West Side Story* owe as much to this mild-mannered writer as to Billy Wilder and the Robert Wise-Jerome Robbins tandem, and that the success of *North by Northwest* is due perhaps not only to Alfred Hitchcock's direction, but also to Lehman's original screenplay.

"When you write for Hitchcock and you know Cary Grant will play the lead, you write differently from when you adapt something for Robert Wise or Martin Ritt," he says with a smile, knowing very well that his words are sacrilegious. "Yes, I disclaim the authorship to a film for anyone who has not also written it. To use the word author in connection with directing is demeaning to the person who wrote the film, be it an adaptation or an original."

Lehman is the kind who likes to wait for the right combination of talent, taste and money, and he is therefore often called "weary and reticent". He admits that the ideal movie is seen and created through one mind, but wonders to what degree even Michelangelo Antonioni or Federico Fellini are one-man creators and to what extent they rely on writers.



"*Blow-Up* and *Juliet of the Spirits* have writer credits that long, but I'm out on thin ice here," he smiles. "I can only talk about the cinema I know, and see the disparity between what critics write and the cold, hard, bitter truth of film-making."

"We're just about to begin *Hello Dolly*. Now, *Hello Dolly* is a musical based on Thornton Wilder's *The Matchmaker*, based on the pre-war *The Merchant of Yonkers*, based on Johann Nestroy's 1842 Viennese play *Einen Jux will er sich machen*, based on John Oxenford's *A Day Well Spent*, staged in London in 1835. Now to say that the screen *Dolly* is by Gene Kelly is rather silly."

Lehman leans back in his Scandinavian teak chair, happy to have made a point, but at the same time reticent. He shouldn't give interviews, he feels, since nothing good comes of it, and wonders aloud if I couldn't be persuaded not to publish this. "It's very complex, the whole thing. I don't know why I get myself talked into these things." Wearily and reticently, we go on. ("Yes, those two adjectives describe me pretty well.") For a moment he talks about such distasteful matters as the critics riling him because he has cast Barbra Streisand for the *Dolly* title role instead of Carol Channing, the reason being of course that movie audiences (average age: 26) don't want to watch their mothers on the screen. "You can't say that, of course."

Lehman's 20th Century-Fox bungalow is a tasteful interior, happily mixing rich Scandinavian and Early American and looking more like a Beverly Hills analyst's suite than a producer's bustling front office. The bungalow isn't that much of a front office, but is located a good half mile from the administration buildings, where crews have erected vast outdoor sets for *Hello Dolly*, set to roll early in January. There is no rush as such to start filming, since the contract between Fox and Broadway super-impresario David Merrick forbids the release of the film as long as Merrick has a theatrical *Dolly* on the road.

When I ask Lehman the obvious question of why he hasn't become a director himself, he acknowledges a latent desire, but stresses the natural gap between writing and directing. "Writing is somehow the antithesis of direction, I feel, and I may not have directorial talents. Writing is a solitary endeavour essentially. I almost did direct my own story *Sweet Smell of Success* ten years ago, but maybe I don't have the guts. Directing takes a lot of conceit. I admire directors who go out there cold and order stars and technicians about without necessarily knowing what they are doing. William



Wyler told me it has happened to him. But as long as writers don't have this talent and directors cannot master the craftsmanship of writing, movies will remain a combined effort, however topsy-turvy, of writers and directors."

The frustrations of non-recognition made Lehman a producer, or a writer-producer, as he prefers to call himself. "Like this, I'm sure to get my name on the posters," he grins. "I've seen *Newsweek* write intelligently on *Executive Suite* without mentioning my name and *SIGHT AND SOUND* review *Virginia Woolf* without mentioning my name. I don't like to be cast as a producer because it falsifies relationships. I've seen it with Mike Nichols and the Burtons during *Virginia Woolf*. When you're the writer, people aren't afraid of you, but when you're the producer, they tend to give in to you too easily and the creative process of give-and-take is ruined."

*Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* was a delicate operation, although it looks as if Lehman in fact only opened windows with his usual nonchalance—placing the end of Act One in the university residence garden and lifting part of Act Two to the all-night roadside bar.

Lehman finds the literary *secret de polichinelle* of the play's homosexuality irrelevant because of the high emotional voltage. The psychological tension of the play is simply human, whether the couple is homo- or heterosexual. He admits, however, that the imaginary child is a latent homosexual fantasy and that this was his toughest nut.\* Lehman and Nichols tried several solutions. The screenwriter thought of making the imaginary son real, and at two o'clock one morning, Nichols called him to suggest they eliminate the son altogether. "I personally feel the best solution would have been to imagine that the child had died a couple of years earlier, but that Martha had never been able to accept this. We felt, however, that we couldn't stray that far away from the play without being accused of literary treason, though it would have been interesting to see how it would have played. Now, we will never know."

By his own admission, Lehman belongs to the Arthur Miller generation, but he realizes that the 'well-made' play is a thing of the past. "I admire *Blow-Up*, but I'm longing for order. I understand that life isn't as neat as a well-built three-acter and that people like Antonioni want to show this, but I'm afraid we'll tilt towards obscurantism and neo-impressionism. But let's not argue about good pictures. It's just too God damn hard to make a good film."

\* \* \*

Born in New York and raised in the Long Island suburb of Woodmere, Lehman started to write short stories and studied writing at City College under the tutelage of Theodore Goodman ("He gave me a B-plus and cautioned me against slickness," Lehman once said. "He was right.") From college he moved to Wall Street and a job as a copy editor on a financial magazine, then drifted into freelance writing for magazines, which he has described as "a very nervous way to make a living." *Collier's* printed his first article when he was 21, and his first big break came after some fifty short stories and novelettes when one of his 100-page stories was adapted into a 'Playhouse 90' television play.

Another short story that carried him far was *Sweet Smell of Success*. (The editor of *Cosmopolitan* published it as *Tell Me About It Tomorrow* because he thought Lehman's title "wasn't quite right for the magazine". Lehman's title has, of course, since become a part of the language.) "I made a deal with Harold Hecht, James Hill and Burt Lancaster, who had just produced *Marty*. It was agreed, with some trepidation, that I should direct as well as script the film. I went to New York to scout locations, and when I came back United Artists had had second thoughts and asked me if I would like to produce instead. After a few unnecessarily emotional scenes, I decided to accept the compromise."

\*Graduating students of UCLA's Theater Arts Department staged a powerful pederast version of Act Three of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* in 1967 with two boys cast as George and Marty (sic).

"There are actors whose sole presence makes lines glow and there are actors who have to psychoanalyse everything to make a performance come alive," he adds after a pause. "There are directors who can't rewrite a line and others, like Dick Brooks, who write their own screenplays. The screenplay has an immense influence on a film. It's the writer who decides if this scene stays in the final draft. It's the writer who decides if so-and-so says this at the swimming pool or in the bedroom. A good writer even exploits the specific talents of his director."

Lehman becomes animated and tells of an incident that made him furious, although his basic diffidence made him back down from publishing what would have been an interesting footnote to film-making. "It was at the end of the shooting in New York of *North by Northwest*, on Fifth Avenue. I was on the opposite sidewalk watching a crowd gathering around Hitchcock and company when Hollis Alpert came along. We talked a couple of minutes when he suddenly asked why I wasn't over there with my boss. My Boss! I was furious and told him why. I had invented everything in the original screenplay, and I told him in no uncertain terms that I considered the crew across the street was just filming my story. On the spot, Hollis asked me to write a piece for the *Saturday Review*. That night I wrote a well-documented invective. Next morning, I sent it off and took a boat to Europe. After two days on the high seas, I had calmed down enough to send a radiogram to Hollis asking him not to print it. Why? Because I wouldn't have convinced anybody and would have created a lot of hate for myself. But I'm not a very courageous man."

But how does this story explain that *North by Northwest* has a scene which looks deceptively like one in Hitchcock's classic *The 39 Steps* of 1935? (The auction room sequence where Cary Grant is trapped and, by overbidding, creates a commotion that allows him to escape.) A variation of the scene also exists in *The Prize*. When asked, Lehman will admit he had stolen from himself by using the scene in his screenplay of *The Prize*, directed by Mark Robson. "As for *North by Northwest*, I can't recall the scene. It was my idea, not Hitchcock's, as it was my idea to put the attempted murder scene with the airplane outdoors, in a field. That somebody else stole in *From Russia with Love*."

"But I come out looking silly saying these things. Are you sure you have to publish this? Can't we do another kind of story, something positive where perhaps people can learn something?" The painful expression is back. Weary and reticent. You said it, Mr. Lehman.

"WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF?": WRITER AT REHEARSAL







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**S**OME TIME AGO the man in charge of TV audience measurement at NBC noticed something unexpected in the ratings: "No matter what programmes are on at 9 o'clock at night, the sets in use are always the same. In other words, people turn on television. They're watching the medium."

In the 1940s—the fabulous forties for the film industry—everyone went to the cinema. It must have been the habit because it couldn't have been the films, and perhaps the film industry sensed, rather than thought, this when in the floundering fifties they tried to lure the

lost generation of cinemagoers back with the slogan: "Let's Go to the Pictures."

Both of these things, if they are true, reflect one aspect of an aphorism that has probably intrigued and irritated more people in the last few years than any other. "The Medium is the Message" is the phrase and the speaker is of course Marshall McLuhan, for some years now Head of the Centre of Culture and Technology in Toronto University.

To many people, he is the supreme pop sociologist. To others, he is the renegade scholar, best remembered for

his book on Tennyson. The trouble is he's hard to place, almost impossible to pin down. With a freewheeling literary style that owes not a little to James Joyce, he skitters through a hundred and one topics as diverse as the telephone, scuba-diving, radio, mini-cars and clothing in his analysis of what modern mass communications are all about and, more particularly, what they are doing to us all.

His main thesis—"The Medium is the Message"—means in broad terms that the effect of a medium, the way it acts upon the recipient, is in itself more socially significant than any piece of content or information that the medium can be used to convey. If one pursues this point, for instance, the argument that there is, say, too much violence on television is relatively less important than the fact that television as a medium works in the way it does.

In assessing the different media of communication, McLuhan has devised a spectrum of media 'temperature'. 'Hot' media are those which provide 'high definition', plenty of data. They are aggressive. They reach out and inform us, leaving us little to do for ourselves. According to McLuhan, the printed page in its various forms, Radio (in its original form), the Photograph, the Lecture and the Movie come at this 'hot' end of the spectrum. At the other end are the 'cool' media:

"A cool medium, whether the spoken word or the manuscript or TV, leaves much more for the listener or user to do than a hot medium. If the medium is of high definition, participation is low. If the medium is of low intensity, the participation is high. Perhaps this is why lovers mumble so. Because the low definition of TV ensures a high degree of audience involvement, the most effective programmes are those that present situations which consist of some process to be completed." (Understanding Media)

So 'cool' is involving, 'hot' is not, is something like what it all adds up to.

McLuhan relates all this to a cultural spiralling effect which he detects. It began when Gutenberg's invention of movable type broke up the oral tradition of the primitive tribe and replaced it with the era of Typographic Man. This was a new kind of man, trained to think lineally and literately simply because that was the way the printed page worked. This period, he argues, lasted until very recently, when the availability of electricity permitted certain technological breakthroughs in the means of disseminating information. Radio, the Telephone, the Telegraph, the Movie and, of course, Television all owe their existence or present state of development to this "Electronic Implosion".

McLuhan deliberately uses 'implosion' rather than 'explosion' because he considers that the emergence within the last half generation of Electronic Man



as successor to Typographic Man has had the effect of reuniting the millions of literate individuals freed by Gutenberg into a new worldwide 'tribal village' with everyone, thanks to developments like Telstar, involved in everyone else's gossip. We are all of us living in the 'all-at-once' world of Marshall McLuhan. We are all of us victims of media fallout, like the man in the recent *New Yorker* cartoon who is told by his doctor: "You're suffering from sensory overload. Cut down on your intake of media."

Refreshingly, McLuhan offers this information as a diagnosis rather than a moral comment. As far as he is concerned: "It's what's happening, baby." And you can see it happening most to our children, the first real Electronic Generation. The information that bombards them daily from assorted media is their real education:

**"The electronic environment makes an information level outside the schoolroom that is far higher than the information level inside the schoolroom. In the 19th century the knowledge inside the schoolroom was higher than the knowledge outside—today it is reversed. The child knows that in going to school he is, in a sense, interrupting his education."** (NBC interview with McLuhan)

In short, in many significant but unperceived ways, our own children are as alien to us as if they were Midwich Cuckoos. They are programmed. We are not.

But, if the medium *is* the message, as McLuhan would have us believe, then all media are not born equal and they certainly do not remain anything like equal in relationship to each other.

Print has clearly been affected by the arrival of the electronic media. There are fewer general interest magazines because they can't match the immediacy of Radio and Television; the ones that remain tend to be more specialist and cover topics in depth. Later arrivals like Television have squeezed pioneer electric media like Radio into new shapes. Satellite communications will presumably reshape Television, and so it goes on.

Take Radio. It carries McLuhan's 'hot' label of being an aggressive, informative, high definition medium, "the medium for frenzy." "If a government monopolises Radio," says McLuhan, "it can determine the opinions of the people." Hitler certainly did pretty well by that token. So, in their very different ways, did Churchill and Roosevelt. And didn't the young Orson Welles have hundreds of Americans out of their homes and running for the hills with his fake newscasts of the Martians landing in his radio production of *The War of the Worlds*? That couldn't happen in America today, by McLuhan's reckoning, because Radio doesn't work that way any more—in America. If the Martians did land,

Americans would expect to see them being interviewed on television by Huntley and Brinkley—in colour.

Television, in fact, has changed the nature of Radio in America (and in this country too, for that matter). It has caused it to cool down, to become for the first time television-without-pictures. That kind of Radio, or rather the available combination of Radio and Television, would not take the strain of the neurotic aggression of a Hitler, just as the decline of McCarthy in America coincided remarkably with the real spread of Television. As the media balance and temperature changed, down the ratings went McCarthy and up came —Jack Paar and Perry Como, two very cool and relaxed customers indeed.

So, whatever happened to the Movie?

Well, the Movie will go down as a very early breakthrough into the Electronic Age, since it took what was essentially a sequential line of still pictures and created around them the illusion of movement. In that famous footage of the horse running, for the first time "the sequence yielded to the simultaneous." In McLuhan's terms: "The message of the movie medium is that of transition from lineal connection to configuration."

Whole new vistas opened up and what happened? They began to film books.

The birth shock of a new medium always seems to have the same womb-seeking effect. The people given the task of handling it retreat to the security of what they know and think they understand:

**"The medium does things to people and they're always completely unaware of this—they don't really notice the new**

**medium that is roughing them up. They think of the old medium because the old medium is always the content of the new medium, as movies tend to be the content of TV and as novels used to be the content of movies."** (NBC interview with McLuhan)

This is what McLuhan describes as the 'rearview mirror' attitude, of moving forward with a wary eye on the past. It wasn't just that novels would make films with a readymade box-office appeal, though that had a big part to play; it was at least partly that filmmaker and audience could only deal confidently with their new medium in the familiar terms of the old. Even so original a film talent as D. W. Griffith carried a copy of Dickens on the set.

Their mental training was to think in terms of literate, sequential narrative lines and they tailored the shape of their films to fit what they and their audience were used to: a good story. And the more celebrated the original novel, the more pleased with itself Hollywood became. (Ironically, while the movie was feeding upon the novel, it was leaving the novel free to move in other directions. This seems to be another basic principle of media inter-relationships. It takes the arrival of a new medium to shake the major predecessor out of its rut.)

It is partly the ability of the Movie to convey so much detailed information so rapidly that qualifies it for McLuhan's 'hot' label. The screen is large, the image precise. You view as a member of an audience, aware of other people around you, swayed to some extent by their reactions to what you are all seeing. Sit



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"YOU'RE SUFFERING FROM SENSORY OVERLOAD. CUT DOWN ON YOUR INTAKE OF MEDIA."

DRAWING BY KOREN © 1967, THE NEW YORKER MAGAZINE, INC.

there, says the Movie, and I will tell you a story. So there you sit and there you look.

And in the beginning was the Dream... "Typographic Man took readily to film because, like books, it offers an inward world of fantasy and dreams..." (Understanding Media)

The Dream Factory provided an escape route for millions of Americans. For a nation still trying to make itself one nation, with all the problems that entailed for the individual, and probably only a semi-literate individual at that, the Movie was the ideal way to buy an hour of oblivion. It was also a good way to earn a few dollars for the film-maker, who rapidly found that dreams were both exploitable and exportable. The interesting thing is that they meant different things to different people—and in some quite unpredictable ways.

Basically the Movie was a non-verbal form with limitless imaginative possibilities. But, as we've seen, it was put into the hands of people who were highly literate (or Typographic) and the way they used the Movie presupposed an equally high level of literacy in the people who saw their movies. In their own cultural environment, this may have been largely so; but when the Movie arrived in non-literate cultures, something quite different occurred.

For instance, when the camera follows someone we can transpose that in our minds as being like the way in which a novelist chooses to take a particular character's 'point of view'. This acceptance of film grammar or sequence is fundamental to us. What the camera (or more often, the film editor) juxtaposes, we accept. We have *seen* it happen. To an African this is by no means a basic assumption. If the camera leaves a character, the African wonders where he's gone, and the rest of the action is lost on him:

"When the camera shifts, they think they see trees moving and buildings growing or shrinking because they cannot make the

literate assumption that space is continuous or uniform. Non-literate people simply don't get perspective or distancing effects of light or shade that we assume are innate human equipment." (Understanding Media)

Another interesting physiological fact which research has thrown up is that whereas we are trained from infancy to 'fix' our eyes in order to read the printed page, the non-literate is unable to do this without being so trained. Instead, he 'scans' the picture. From this it must surely follow that although the content remains identical, the way it is seen can vary considerably and so must the impression it leaves on the viewer.

Sound raised another complication of comprehension which, according to McLuhan, can be traced directly back to the cultural spiral. In non-literate societies you have the original oral culture of the primitive tribe, and the life blood of that culture is *participation*. Now the Movie when it is silent permits a fair degree of participation. The picture may be detailed, but the information is not quite complete. There is room for personal interpretation. The silent Movie evoked a scene and the audience completed its own dialogue. (The captions were usually more hindrance than help—hence the boos and catcalls.)

When sound provides its own completion, paradoxically it places the audience one row further back, and even further back in the case of a non-literate audience. It has been widely observed that the technical advance of sound marked the virtual eclipse of certain great film-making talents. Many critics consider that the great days of the Russian film industry stopped short at that point. It could just be that McLuhan has tipped us the wink as to why. The realistic use of sound was just too much too soon for whole sections of the Movie's audience. Significantly, directors like Eisenstein and Chaplin sensed this and continued to use sound only as

a creative complement to the picture for many years.

Meanwhile, back at the Dream Factory... Hollywood was mass-producing canned Utopia, now complete with sound. What it didn't realise was that it had a hot property on its hands in more ways than one. If Radio is "the medium for frenzy", the Movie can be every bit as inflammatory—out of its original context.

"The motion picture industry has provided a window on the world, and the colonised nations have looked through that window and have seen the things of which they have been deprived. It is perhaps not generally realised that a refrigerator can be a revolutionary symbol—to a people who have no refrigerators... (Hollywood) helped to build up the sense of deprivation of man's birthright, and that sense of deprivation has played a large part in the national revolutions of post-war Asia." (President Sukarno of Indonesia to an audience of Hollywood top brass—1956).

So, whatever happened to the Movie? Well, it found itself big, bright, loud—and loved.

And then came Television which was, after all, only the movie-in-miniature. Or was it? Not so, says McLuhan. The superficial similarities were just hypnotising us to the fact that what we were involved with was an entirely new medium. And 'involved' was the key to it all:

"Because we see movies on TV without realising that these movies have been totally transformed by the TV transmission, we naturally assume that they have much in common.

"The TV image offers some three million dots per second to the viewer. This mosaic mesh of dots involves the viewer as maker and participant. From these he accepts only a few hundred each instant from which to make an image. The film image in a motion picture theatre offers many more million bits of data per second, and the viewer does not have to make the same drastic reduction of items to form his impression. Put directly and briefly, one has to say of TV that it is a sort of 'spiritual' instrument, with the viewer on the receiving end of a light charge. The TV viewer is the screen and the vanishing point. Hence the extraordinary degree of involvement in the TV experience. The movie viewer remains quite detached and is engaged in looking at the screen. The TV viewer *is* the screen." (McLuhan article in 'Family Circle')

If you need further proof of this, look at children looking at TV. They practically climb into the set, and the reason in these National Health days is not myopia. They are a part of the action. Think of the way, too, that fuzzy sound or an out of focus picture worries a cinema audience. Yet at home their domestic TV sets are hardly ever properly tuned. The difference is the



medium. The TV watcher is compensating all the time for lack of data; another little adjustment makes no real difference.

And then there was a revealing scene in Truffaut's *Fahrenheit 451* which projects this principle over the brink into satire—but not so far as most of the audience may imagine. Montag's wife watches a TV play in which questions are addressed to her by name by actors in the play. She is required to complete the action before the play can continue. The fact that any answer she gives will suffice is immaterial. She has the illusion of participation. "The viewer is the screen." One of the attractions at Expo '67 was the Czech pavilion's Kino-Automat, which periodically interrupted the filmed story while spectators were allowed to vote for plot variations by pushing buttons on their seats. From viewer to voter in one easy lesson.

The qualitative difference that TV provides seems to me, particularly post-McLuhan, to be a steadily clarifying pattern. What prevented it from becoming clearer sooner were the superficial 'similarities' between TV and the Movie, blurred by the personalities and material which turned up on both, and the fundamental traditionalism that makes the guardians of a new medium deal with it in terms of its predecessors: "The old medium is always the content of the new medium."

Inevitably, TV began by looking like mini-movies. There was a raft of old B-pictures to hand, all the first generation technicians were drawn from Hollywood, and so on. TV shouldn't by all the old golden rules have caught on—but it did.

The quiz show was perhaps one of Television's earliest true manifestations. The extent of its success surprised and appalled almost everyone who felt that Television was, by definition, trivia writ large. They missed the point. What now seems clear, if one holds any brief for McLuhan, is that the lack of significance attached to the events being portrayed was of no importance compared to the mechanism that made the whole package vicariously appealing. Here was enter-

tainment that fitted the medium. Everybody wants to get into the act and the quiz show let them. Which is presumably why the van Doren quiz 'scandal' of a few years ago created the furore it did. The audience realised that they had been left out of the act all along.

The involvement factor would seem to be at the heart of most successful TV programming. Certainly TV re-runs of old movies draw the ratings, but that is not, by strict definition, Television—merely incestuous cannibalising of one medium by another. And incidentally, an interesting sidelight on American programming is that detective B-pictures do every bit as well as big budget movies because, once again, they demand involvement. Who done it?

"Who?" rather than "What?", says McLuhan, is the vital clue. TV is people-orientated whereas the Movie is traditionally story-orientated. "A large part of your TV audience is still basically print-orientated but the new TV generation do not care about stories. They care about people doing things."

Sometimes all the people do is sit and chat. The big stars of Television are the Paars, the Sullivans, the Carsons, or our own, our very own, Eamonn Andrews and Cliff Michelson—all of them incredibly relaxed and super-ordinary. The big movie stars have not adapted too well, probably because their personalities were too big to begin with: they make good guests, but poor hosts. This is particularly true of women stars, and leads one to wonder whether women have an innate tendency to be hot personalities while men find it easier to keep their cool.

The growing interest in people would certainly help explain the hypnotic hold of serials like *Coronation Street* and *Peyton Place*—those synthetic non-worlds of non-events—and the gradual demise, particularly in the States, of formalised TV drama like the old Kraft Theatre. Paradoxically, it was this early traditional type of TV show that gave some of the clues to the whole medium. Playwrights like Paddy Chayefsky and Reginald Rose groped their way towards what seemed to them the kind of drama that best suited the medium, and their

answer came out every time—people. Don't have them do much; just let the audience get to know them. Today, a decade later, some of the most successful series are based on character exploration in depth rather than on narrative line.

Next to people, TV comes into its own by depicting a process. McLuhan describes how a TV programme showing a concert rehearsal proves more riveting than a programme of the actual concert. You are more involved because an extra layer has been stripped away to allow you behind the scenes. An audience will watch lengthy credit sequences for the same reason; once again the viewer is partly 'maker'.

Working on the principle that if you can't beat 'em, join 'em, a good part of Hollywood rapidly became a TV subsidiary and the sound stages echoed with the TV series coming off the assembly line. The rest of Hollywood retaliated with the blockbuster, throwing screen size and spectacle, not to mention money, into the balance. In this, says McLuhan, Technicolor accidentally helped Hollywood: "... Technicolor is the closest the movie can get to the effect of the TV image. Technicolor greatly lowers photographic intensity and creates, in part, the visual conditions for participant viewing."

But Hollywood had another trick up her sleeve if she had realised it; though of course she couldn't, argues McLuhan, because she didn't understand the way or the why of Television's workings. Paddy Chayefsky's *Marty* was probably the first successful TV play to be turned into a successful movie—by accident.

"*Marty* was a TV show that got on to the screen in the form of low definition or low-intensity realism. It was not a success story, and it had no stars, because the low-intensity TV image is quite incompatible with the high-intensity star image. *Marty*, which in fact looked like an early silent movie or an old Russian picture, offered the film industry all the clues it needed for meeting the TV challenge."

(Understanding Media)

To a limited extent, of course, the challenge has been met, although the

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British film industry seemed to find it easier to follow the realistic path indicated by *Marty*, *Room At the Top*, *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, *A Kind of Loving*, all touched a nerve by capturing, by whatever means, the small moments of life as it is lived or as we imagine it to be lived. They also left us room to fill in between the lines.

Involvement is McLuhan's word for it; Dichter calls it the 'closure' principle. Whatever you like to call the business of leaving your audience something to complete for themselves, there is no doubt that Television tumbled to it first and helped point the Movie in that direction. Good TV series these days don't explain too much. There is an allusive sophistication about *The Avengers* or *I Spy* that is a great part of their charm and success. A lot of apparently key facts about the leading characters are never explained, or only emerge piecemeal as the series progress. They're cliffhangers with a difference. They cool you down, says McLuhan, and the medium with them. Where there is a plot, it's often so absurd that it calls out not to be taken seriously.

This is a clever bit of bluff and counter-bluff, because it allows the show to have a mass appeal on the lowest level of comic book drama, while the would-be intellectual thinks he is doubly clever by appreciating all the 'in' jokes of self-parody of the basic form. This kind of split-level coolness, one suspects, accounts for a large part of the huge success enjoyed by the current rash of Bond-Flint-Helm films.

Another reason for the emergence of this kind of stylised narrative in popular films is the growing importance in America of colour Television. To McLuhan this is a whole new medium, not a simple addition of colour to black and white Television. He cites clinical evidence to prove that it is seen by the eye in quite a different way, so different as to affect the content that might be picked up from identical colour and black and white pictures.

This, he says, has had as one of its effects the nostalgic revival of an earlier and minor American art form—the comic book. Here was a low definition participant medium which could best handle broad sweeping splashes of colour and incomplete characterisations, finding itself with a new piece of readymade content. Batman was born for colour TV; he just had to wait twenty-five years to inherit it. Today, even though colour TV is not widespread, its effects are going ahead of it. Batman and the Dick Tracy-like Men from U.N.C.L.E. may not be exactly the next-door neighbours of Coronation Street, but they are people we know from way back, involving us, amusing us—and not explaining enough to break the spell.

While TV has been finding its own feet, the advertising industry has also

made some parallel discoveries about the nature of film. It would be encouraging to think that the one might have shed light on the other, but, as McLuhan has pointed out, eyes are too closed for this really to happen. Each tree grows its own branches, quite ignorant of the existence of the wood.

In this case the problem that perturbed advertising agencies was why, in those early days, was the storyboard invariably more effective than the final film? Easy, says McLuhan, they were dealing with one medium in terms of another. Moreover, "the incomplete form allows the audience more participation than the completed form." Every client 'read' the storyboard his way. The finished film couldn't possibly duplicate his vision exactly.

From that point, however, the TV commercial has progressed a long way—perhaps further, because of its consistent and immediate commercial pressures, than any other form of film in certain directions. When people say, as some of them do, that they find the commercials more entertaining than the TV programmes, they are unwittingly recognising that the commercial has disciplined itself into an effective use of the medium. Telling a story that is specific to a brand in thirty seconds is no pushover, as many a celebrated director has found to his cost.

People today are 'educated' by everything they see, not just by material labelled educational. Where film form is concerned, their perception is trained just as much, if not more so, by the commercials as by the programmes, and all of this has had its effect on the way they view the Movie—and the way the Movie looks at itself. For instance:

**"The commercial has preconditioned mass-viewing audiences to make do with no story-lines—with many of the techniques utilised in modern theatrical films . . .**

**"Fellini and Bergman and such pull the story-line off the film and the result is that you become much more profoundly involved in the film process. When you put a story-line on a novel or a film, you're much less involved. Take the detective story. Edgar Allan Poe discovered, you see, that if you take the story-line off the detective story, the audience has to participate and make up the story as it goes. And so, paradoxically, pull the story-line off any situation and you get a much higher level of creative participation on the part of the reader or the audience. Fellini's *8½* is a world where the audience has to work very hard."** (NBC interview with McLuhan)

For Fellini, read Antonioni, Warhol, et al. And don't ignore the apparently sudden rise of Dick Lester, a man whose early training was almost exclusively with the TV commercial and whose first films were family-size commercials themselves and none the less entertaining for that. There is a nice irony, to my mind,

in the way that TV commercial techniques have found their way, via the movie in the shape of Lester's own films, back to TV's *The Monkees*.

It's not simply a matter of taste, but one of sheer comprehension:

**"Critics of television have failed to realise that the motion pictures they are lionising—such as *The Knack*, *Hard Day's Night*, *What's New*, *Pussycat*?—would prove unacceptable as mass audience films if the audience had not been preconditioned by television commercials to abrupt zooms, elliptical editing, no story-line, flash cuts."** (The Medium is the Massage)

So, whatever finally happened to the Movie?

Well, thanks to Television, it got a roughing up, a shaking out, a dusting off and now a cooling down. It learned something about riding with the punch and quite a lot of home truths about itself. Not enough, by any means. There's still too much of the production line technique, waiting to run off carbon copies of successful models. But for every sad piece of self-immolation—enshrining the small screen Batman, Uncle men and Thunderbirds—there are surely signs of new talents emerging, often from TV, who sense what the Movie can do and should be doing to survive and prosper.

Anyone who reads McLuhan as a prophet of doom for the Movie business, has got it all wrong. As I read him, he's pointing out a lot of things that should have been obvious long since and that are still not too late to put right. He says a lot of things, many of them outrageous, some of them even self-contradictory. Anyone who wants to pick holes will find plenty, and if they want to use that as an excuse to reject McLuhan's thinking totally, that's their privilege. McLuhan, by his own admission, is only concerned with 'exploratory probes'. He deals in themes, not theses. At the simplest level he is explaining, perhaps, a lot of phenomena which didn't seem to make much separate sense.

He's saying that media are different in kind and that although you can get away with talking 'hot' in a 'cool' medium or vice versa, you collect the biggest rewards if you use each medium for what it can do best. He's also warning that media can affect each other so that slowly but surely the media norm or centre of gravity shifts. Today's cinema audience has been trained to 'read' film largely by television, and that is at least part of the reason why such 'cool' films as *Last Year in Marienbad*, or *Hard Day's Night*, can win such sympathetic response.

These are some of the things I take McLuhan to be saying. In a way, he's the film-maker's Shane, riding into town to tell them right from wrong. Not everybody wants to welcome him, but, Mister, they need him bad.



# THE TWO BEZHIN MEADOWS

David Robinson



THE DEATH OF STEPOK. LEFT: FIRST VERSION, WITH BORIS ZAKHAVA AS THE FATHER. RIGHT: SECOND VERSION, WITH NIKOLAI KHMELYOV.

**A**FTER THE RELEASE OF *The General Line* in 1929, Eisenstein, along with Eduard Tissé and Grigori Alexandrov, was sent abroad to study new film techniques in foreign countries. Their first few months out of the Soviet Union were a bewildering shuttling about Europe, between Switzerland, Germany, England, France and Belgium. The cinéastes of Western Europe were enthralled, while extremist political groups excited themselves over the presence of this dangerous Bolshevik Jew. More than once the police of various countries asked the little group of artists to move on. Everywhere Eisenstein lectured and taught. In London he attended a celebrated Film Society Study Group, which made a profound impression on several of Grierson's youngsters. In May 1930 the party arrived in Hollywood at the invitation of Paramount. By December it was clear that the projects they were working on there must be abortive, and they moved on to Mexico to make a film for Upton Sinclair. There they spent all of the year 1931. In February 1932 they began their return journey to the U.S.S.R., passing a few difficult weeks in the U.S.A. on the way back. On May 9, 1932 they arrived home after an absence of two years and nine months. Eisenstein's friends all noticed that he looked very much more than three years older than on his departure in 1929.

At first still hopeful that he would be able to continue work on the material shot in Mexico, Eisenstein found himself taken up with lecturing and designing a teaching syllabus for the State Institute of Cinematography. He started work on the scenario of a comedy, *MMM*; he discussed with Paul Robeson

a long-cherished project for a film on Toussaint L'Ouverture, *The Black Consul*. But both of these were destined to be added to the list of frustrated projects of the years since *The General Line*. Not until 1935 did Eisenstein begin work on his first sound film, though he had developed sophisticated theories on the use of sound as early as 1928. The new picture was to be *Bezhin Meadow*.

From March to May 1935 Eisenstein worked on the script by Alexander Rzheshesky, an actor from silent film days who had turned scenarist (Pudovkin's *A Simple Case*; Shengelaia's *Twenty-Six Commissars*). The original idea and title were suggested to Rzheshesky by a story in Turgenev's *Leaves from a Huntsman's Notebook*. Jay Leyda's production diary records:

"Turgenev's story tells how he lost his way home from a hunting hike, and stayed the night at a bonfire kept by boys watching the horse herds. The ghost stories they told to keep themselves awake . . . were recalled by Rzheshesky when he was commissioned by the Communist Youth League to write a scenario on the theme of the farm work done by Young Pioneers. He went to live in Bezhin Meadow for two years to observe and record the contrast between the Russian peasant child as Turgenev knew him and as he is today."

The central character of Stepok was modelled on a modern Soviet hero, Pavlik Morosov, a little pioneer who organised a troop of young field guards so well that his family, planning sabotage, saw in him a class enemy, and murdered him.

From the start, one suspects a degree of conflict between





THE CHURCH SEQUENCE IN THE FIRST VERSION: CARRYING OFF THE CRUCIFIX.

Eisenstein and his writer, who seems to have belonged to the more 'literary' school of scenarists of his day. Certainly Eisenstein seems eventually to have improvised a good deal. Leyda recorded: "I have seen more than one filming day pass without E. referring once to the script—so reliant is he upon the firm mental images he keeps within him. He says that all plans are to prepare you for the new ideas that the day's work brings."

For the first period of actual shooting, Leyda, who was one of four students of the State Institute of Cinematography attached to the film as apprentice directors, provides an incomparable eye-witness account. (SIGHT AND SOUND, Spring 1959; *Kino*, 1960) He describes Eisenstein's lengthy auditions to cast the main role of the child Stepok, which ended with the choice of Vitya Kartashov, an unlikely little boy with a mottled skin and sweep's-brush blonde hair. The boy's father was to be played by Boris Zakhava, director of the Vakhtangov Theatre. Later Yelena Teleshova, a theatre director with the First Art Theatre, was cast as the collective chairman, Praskovia. Other theatre people who are recorded by Leyda as playing small parts were Erast Garin of the Meyerhold Theatre, and Nikolai Okhlopkov.

The first shots were made on May 5 1935, when filming began in the apple orchards of Kolomenskoye:

"In the wake of romanticism, Turgenev was attracted by the impressionists, who were in turn attracted by the Japanese print-makers; Turgenev's introduction of impressionism into literature was the key the episode needed . . . The problem for these first few compositions became one of showing the audience how Turgenev saw the things around him. The impression of this brief prologue must not be that of turning over a collection of Japanese prints and Chinese drawings, but of examining, lovingly, the corners and details of a landscape lit by the soft last light of romanticism, selected by an artist fascinated by the eye of the Orient." (Jay Leyda)

Eisenstein's eye, it seems, was already diverted from the more rigid Stalinist ideals of socialist realism.

On June 15 1935 the unit moved to Armavir near the Azov Sea, where a week was spent filming the processions of workers riding to the harvest, scenes which were to have had

strong dramatic significance in the finished film. Next the crew moved to Kharkov to film the acted scenes of this 'Highway' episode. Meanwhile, the first of the succession of misfortunes which were to dog the film occurred. Eisenstein, who had gone to Moscow with Tissé, was delayed by an attack of food poisoning. By the time the director arrived on location, bad weather had set in, to cause further delays.

In August shooting began in Moscow, where a field near the Mosfilm Studios had been sown in the spring to provide a location for the film's final scenes—night in the fields, with the Pioneer field guards heading the incendiaries off from the corn, and the shooting of Stepok. From this the unit moved into the studios, first for the scenes of Stepok's death, with the crazed murderer father lecturing the dying child on the duties of a son; then for the scenes inside the father's home—a hut interior built up in expressionistic exaggerated perspectives and "complete even to a jar of cockroaches ready for active service in close-ups." Meanwhile exteriors for the church scenes were being built on a nearby lot, though whether these scenes were shot at this stage, or when shooting was resumed in 1936 is not quite clear; for in October Eisenstein fell ill with smallpox—a condition dangerous to his already weakened heart. It was thought he had contracted the disease from one of the ecclesiastical properties he was selecting for his church sequences.

Shortly afterwards, a wave of xenophobia following upon the assassination of Kirov forced foreign workers into difficult personal choices; and Jay Leyda left Russia. So we no longer have his detailed first-hand evidence of what happened subsequently.

Evidently in the director's absence, the material already shot—something like 60 per cent of the finished film—was screened by Boris Shumyatsky, the administrative head of the Soviet film industry. Shumyatsky, an essential philistine whose overriding ambition was to create a film factory on Hollywood lines on the shores of the Black Sea, did not like Eisenstein, and took the opportunity to launch a fierce attack on his film. (More powerful influences may also have been at work, however.) For one thing, Shumyatsky made it clear, his personal, Hollywood-oriented tastes would have preferred a



happy ending. More important, he accused Eisenstein of 'mysticism': the film's treatment of superstition and religion no longer suited a somewhat less oppressive policy towards religion in rural areas.

\* \* \*

It is interesting to find the old charges still reflected a quarter of a century later. The critic R. Yureniev, in his biographical introduction to the first volume of Eisenstein's Collected Writings (1964) speaks of Eisenstein allowing his attention to be diverted, losing his sense of priorities, being distracted by 'spicy' contrasts between images of old and new. "Forgetting about the idea and the political tasks of the film, Eisenstein self-forgetfully experimented in the field of frame composition, rhythm, the combination of image and sound—music, noise, voices. Many of these experiments were talented, pointed, correct. Eisenstein's approach to work with actors, his deep reflections on the method of actors' work in the cinema, was progressive. But all this still did not bring success, inasmuch as the intellectual basis of the film was false.

"In the performance of B. Zakhava, the pro-kulak peasant, the pioneer's father, appeared as a sort of Pan,\* with primitive, pantheistic motives. The pioneer Stepok . . . looked more like a child out of a Nesterov painting than like a contemporary Soviet boy. A central place in the film was given to the excessively extended episode of the sacking of the church by the *kolkhozniki*. Seduced by the contrasts between the faces of the icons and the actual living faces, occupied with the complex rhythms of movement of people carrying the icons out of the church, the director did not notice that all this episode—unnecessary to the progress of the action—gave a distressing impression by showing (the *kolkhozniki*) destroying ancient works of art, like barbarians.

"Finally Eisenstein recognised the errors of his work . . ."

Eisenstein stood firm against Shumyatsky's yearning for a happy end, but had to give way on the other points. He was given permission to revise the film, and at once set to work with Isaac Babel on a new script. (Yureniev suggests that Babel may have already helped with revisions on Rzheshesky's scenario.) The script was completely reworked, and to accord with the new conceptions of the film, certain leading parts were recast. Boris Zakhava was replaced as the father by Nikolai Khmelyov, an actor from the more consciously 'psychological' school of the Moscow Art Theatre. P. Arzhanov replaced Vassily Orlov as the chief of the political department. Filming recommenced on August 22 1936, and continued at Yalta and Odessa until October. On November 11 Eisenstein returned to Moscow. On March 17 1937 the blow finally fell. Shumyatsky definitively halted work on *Bezhin Meadow*.† Exactly a month later the magazine *Sovietskoye Isskustvo* published Eisenstein's obligatory act of self-abasement, *The Mistakes of Bezhin Meadow*. The article, as is the way with this genre of writing, takes on an almost religious, incantatory tone in its self-besmirchment:

"What caused catastrophe to overtake the picture I had worked on for over two years? What was the mistaken viewpoint which, despite honesty of feelings and devotion to work, brought the production to a perversion of reality, making it politically unsubstantial and consequently inartistic?

"The mistake is rooted in one deep-seated intellectual and individualist illusion, an illusion which, beginning with small things, can subsequently lead to big mistakes and tragic outcomes. It is an illusion which Lenin constantly decried, an illusion which Stalin tirelessly exposes—the illusion that one may accomplish truly revolutionary work 'on one's own', outside the fold of the collective, outside of a single iron unity with the collective . . ."

He accused himself of abstract, un-Marxist 'generalisation' in his conception of the story and characters. Errors in conception had led to errors in form:

\* Eisenstein seems actually to have modelled Zakhava's make-up on Vrubel's painting of Pan, in the Tretyakov Gallery.

† It is only small consolation that Shumyatsky's own downfall came barely eight months later.

"Since attention is not fully centred on man, on his character, on his action, the role of accessory and auxiliary means becomes excessive. Hence the hypertrophy of the settings: the den instead of a hut, the distorted foreshortening in the camera shots and deformed lighting effects. Decorations, scenic effects, lighting—the setting instead of the actor. The same applies to the characters: the image displaces the actor."

Eisenstein, in fact, was admitting to 'formalism', the worst artistic crime in those dangerous years, and one currently being extirpated from the theatre. The film could not be saved, and the only way was clear:

"I must seriously work on my own outlook and seek a profound Marxist approach to new subjects. Specifically, I must study reality and the new man . . . The Party, the leadership of the cinematographic industry and the collective of the cinematographic workers will help me to create new, lifelike and necessary pictures."

The whole *Bezhin Meadow* affair was evidently a terrible blow to Eisenstein, following as it did upon a whole succession of abortive projects and the tragedy of the Mexican material. His consolation was work. By August 1937 he seems already to have embarked on the collaboration with Pyotr Pavlenko on the scenario for *Russ*, or, as it eventually became, *Alexander Nevsky*. He never returned to *Bezhin Meadow*.

\* \* \*

There were, then, two films, not one. The plot, the cast and the general orientation of the two versions were very different. Of the first, something like two thirds was shot; of the second, perhaps about the same, taking into account that some of the already shot material would have been usable in this version. No complete version of either scenario seems as yet to be publicly available (the publication of Eisenstein's complete written works, currently at Volume 4, will not be complete for several years); but the Soviet State Film Archive recently published full comparative synopses in an index to Eisenstein's work issued in connection with a special retrospective. (See page 37.)

The differences between these two versions would have gone much deeper than simply differences in the organisation of somewhat similar, occasionally identical narrative elements. And Eisenstein's critics were at least accurate in their opinion that he was too individual an artist and too complex an intellect to be restricted by the short-term political utility of the anecdote. The first version was a metaphorical and

\* *The Mistakes of Bezhin Meadow*, reprinted in Marie Seton's *Sergei M. Eisenstein* (Bodley Head, 1952).

THE CHURCH SEQUENCE. ICON PATRIARCH AND PEASANT PATRIARCH; AND PIONEER AS PUTTO.





philosophical tragedy—the conflict between the past (the father) and the future (Stepok). While Stepok belonged to the new world, his father was ruled by the dictates of the old religion. But it was not quite as simple as that. Eisenstein (whose upbringing by a religious mother and a Christianised Jewish father had left its marks) was concerned with the relationship of the different elements of religion, of belief, of the church.

Two scenes acquired especial importance in this context. In the first, where the *kulaks*, as the last defenders of the old society, take refuge in the church, their rifles grope out of the rich and sugared carvings of the reredos. In the other, a scene in which the church is turned into the *kolkhoz* club, the peasant women dismantling the building are surrounded by haloes intended for painted saints; an old man seems mirrored by the image of St. Peter; the little pioneers find their reflections in icon angels. The morals are complex: Man makes God in his own image; the church must be cast out of the Temple as Christ cast out the moneylenders, so that the human values which the church elevates to heaven may be reclaimed for earth; the *kolkhoz* club is *man's* church.

All this (Shumyatsky's 'mysticism') would have been quite absent from the second version. The action is confined to one day; the conflict of past and future is no longer emphasised. The formal organisation of the film to suggest metaphors of past—present—future (the action of the first version progresses concurrently through Spring, Summer and Autumn and through Morning, Noonday, Evening, Night and Sunrise) is abandoned. The conflict is at a much more personal level. Where the first version is a metaphorical and philosophical fable, the second is a realistic psychological tragedy. Samokhin is not a *bednak*, or poor man, motivated by belief in the old religion, but a *kulak* who is fighting to keep what is his own. The closing dialogue in the two versions clearly reveals the difference. In the first the father says:

"When the Lord God made Heaven and Earth and people like you and me, my son, he said: 'Go forth and multiply. But when the son betrays the father, kill him like a dog.'"

In Babel's script the scene runs:

STEPOK: Father, Father!

SAMOKHIN: I am here. They wanted to take you away from me. But I would not give you up. My son is my blood.

The distinction is between the religious and the possessive motive. The broad idea of the class struggle, which Eisenstein's critics found lacking in both versions, had been elaborated into altogether more complex conceptions.

\* \* \*

Both *Bezhin Meadows* were stacked away in the Mosfilm archives when work was stopped in 1937. There were rumours of their destruction, but it seems pretty certain that the negatives still survived when the studios were evacuated during the war. The generally accepted story of their fate is that special bunkers were built in fields near the studios to house the Mosfilm archives. Either through bombing or hasty building, the masonry of some of the bunkers became defective, and they were flooded in the winter of 1943 or 1944. After the war, when the archive was exhumed, the *Bezhin Meadow* material was among a number of films destroyed by water damage.

Not quite everything was lost. Someone connected with the film (it might have been Eisenstein or one of his assistants, perhaps even Pera Atasheva, his wife) had made a habit of clipping a frame or two from one end of most of the shots as they were printed. These odd frames remained in film cans in Eisenstein's personal archive until they were brought to light by Atasheva shortly before her death in 1965. Printed up as stills, they were worked over and reassembled in correct narrative order by a young research worker, Naum Kleimann, who took over from the widow Eisenstein the task of transcribing, ordering and editing Eisenstein's writings. Kleimann first put together the still shots of the first version to make a

study film (he is still at work on a similar record of the second version). Then, with the help of Sergei Yutkevitch, this first assembly was developed into a film for public showing. Yutkevitch was perhaps uniquely equipped for the job. His varied creative association with Eisenstein dated back to 1921/2 when they seem to have worked together on several productions at the 1st Proletkult Workers' Theatre. Eisenstein was then 24 and Yutkevitch 18. They remained in sympathy; Eisenstein felt that he and Yutkevitch, as *montageurs*, saw with the same eyes.

It was evidently a challenging task to evoke through static material a film in which mass and movement and sound were to have played an immense role. An example of the problems was the scene at the end of the first version where the young *kulak*, attempting to escape, is run down by a tractor. Only four shot-frames exist of this scene, and at first it seemed impossible to include it in the film. (It does not appear in the first completed version, which was shown at the 1967 Moscow Film Festival.) Later, however, Kleimann and Yutkevitch experimented, permutating these four small evidences until they succeeded in dramatising the sequence, which is now included. The music too presented problems, for Gavril Popov was unable to trace any copy of the original score he had written for *Bezhin Meadow*. Bearing in mind, however, Eisenstein's later devotion to Prokofiev as composer, a very sensitive compilation of his symphonic music has been linked to the images.

The material in this film is not all from the first version. Presumably reckoning the difficulty of producing dramatic climaxes in an assembly of this nature, Yutkevitch introduces from the second version the fire scene, an exciting crescendo of pictures which culminates in Stepok's freeing of the *kolkhoz* pigeons, trapped in their cote on the roof. A favourite Eisenstein image of billowing smoke explodes into a flight of birds.

Inevitably this half-hour film, with its rather solemn introduction by Yureniev (a film-maker might have been a more sympathetic commentator) is only the shadow of a shadow; but it is enough to make one regret bitterly the loss of *Bezhin Meadow*. It is impossible to guess what would have been the effect of his experiments with sound and sound metaphors (Leyda: "An Eisenstein sound film will be visual-sound counterpoint, in his own words—the highest plane for the realisation of conflict between optical and acoustical impulses"), but in other respects it would certainly have ranked with his best work. The images are vigorous and elegant, but without the self-consciousness of the pictorial preoccupations revealed by the Mexican material. This was also, of course, the only film in which he would have used actors in contemporary roles in a sound film: in all three films which he completed afterwards he was working in forms of 'historical' stylisation. Leyda felt that Eisenstein cast theatre directors in several roles "because E. knows that other directors are likely to comprehend his wishes faster." Other eye-witnesses confirm the range and artistry he had developed in little Vitya Kartashov. Even the stills convey the emotional effect of the death scenes.

\* \* \*

*Bezhin Meadow* and its makers seemed to be dogged by a malevolent fate. The shadows of the remaining eleven years of Eisenstein's life and career are well known. Isaac Babel was executed. Rzheshesky never wrote another scenario. More than one of the actors died within a few years of making the film. Poor Vitya/Stepok contracted meningitis. He recovered, but was severely injured in front-line army service during the war.

When the new *Bezhin Meadow* was premiered in Moscow last year, Vitya Kartashov (who had always been more interested in mathematics than in films) was discovered working as an engineer in Moscow, and invited to the show. His childhood illness had impaired his early memory. Now 42, he remembered practically nothing of the merry times he had had with Eisenstein and his colleagues in making the film.





## Bezhin Meadow FIRST VERSION

The subject deals with actual events of the period of collectivisation, and the story of the death of the pioneer Pavlik Morozov.

**Prologue:** Turgenievian locales. Orchards in bloom. Pioneers at school.

**The Forest Edge:** Stepok cries over the body of his mother. "Father beat her to death." The father's hut. The father complains to the *podkulak*\* about his son, who has given himself to "the Soviet power."

**Stepok's Return.** The father turns on him. "If the son betrays his father, kill him like a dog!" Appearance of Praskovia and the pioneers. The father says that he is not involved in the arson of the corn crop. Praskovia takes away Stepok's little sister. Stepok leaves his father's house.

**The Siege of the Church:** The cornered incendiaries open fire from the church where they have sheltered. A *komsomolets* steals behind the altar. Fighting: arrest of incendiaries.

**The Highway:** A stream of tractors. The people are on their way to haymaking. Appearance of the incendiaries under escort. A

tornado of whistling. Attempt to organise a lynching. Stepok relieves the tension by making a joke. The incendiaries withdraw amidst laughter. Haymaking. Arrival of the *Nachpolit*.†

**Dismantling of the Church:** The *kolkhozniki* destroy the iconostase. The women in the apse. Procession. Priest on the bell-tower. Pioneers pile up the icons.

**The Ravine:** The arsonists and Stepok's father disarm and kill their escort. Woman and child in wood. The youngest incendiary rapes the woman.

**The Night Watch:** Bezhin Meadow. Watch-fires by the river. The pioneers' song. Stepok on the watchtower. The father's shot. The wounded Stepok recognises his father. "If the son betrays his father . . ."

**The Birchwood:** Pursuit and arrest of the incendiaries. The youngest incendiary run down and killed by a tractor.

**Bezhin Meadow:** Arrival of the *Nachpolit* with the doctor. They tend Stepok. The children gather flowers. *Nachpolit* with Stepok. Sunrise. Death of Stepok.

## SECOND VERSION

**The Birchwood:** Evening. Stepok and Samokhin (the father has a name in this version) set a trap for a wolf. Maslov tells them about the arrival of the new *Nachpolit*.

**Machine Tractor Station:** Preparation of tractors and combines for the harvest. *Nachpolit* exhorts the teams.

**Samokhin's Izba:** Samokhin and the *podkulak* plan the arson of the Machine Tractor Station. Stepok's grandmother stuffs matches into the head of a sunflower. Stepok, waking, overhears the plot.

**Machine Tractor Station:** Night. Conversation between *Nachpolit* and the watchman Sidorich. Sidorich begins his watch. Incendiaries toss smouldering sunflowers on to the fuel supply. Stepok warns the *Nachpolit*. The sunflowers are extinguished.

**Samokhin's Izba:** Early morning. Arrest of Samokhin.

**Church:** Skirmish with the incendiaries. Storming of the church. Arrest of the incendiaries.

**Highway:** Procession of machines, The arrested incendiaries. Attempted lynching.

**Central Building of the Collective (Dvor Ekonomii):** Explosion of the (?petrol) tank, ignited by unnoticed sunflower-fuses. Attempt to extinguish fire. Arrival of firemen.

**Birchwood:** Children go to the night watch. Stepok exchanges with Yegorka the right to duty on the watchtower.

**Edge of the Ravine:** The incendiaries kill their guard and hide in the wood. Maslov rapes a woman.

**The Night Watch:** Watch-fires. Stepok tells a story about a revolutionary.

**Birchwood:** Tractor column. Incendiaries in the wood.

**Night Watch in the Field:** Stepok on the tower. Shot. Father and son. "You do not give away your own blood." Stepok plunges into the corn. The father's second shot. The children find Stepok.

**Birchwood:** Round-up of incendiaries. Arrest of Samokhin at the wolf-trap.

**The Fields:** The *komsomolites* take Stepok away. Death of Stepok. *Nachpolit* bears Stepok. The children lead the horses. Funeral procession. The pioneers salute Stepok.

\**podkulak*: A labourer who supports the Kulak system by working for Kulaks.

†*Nachpolit*: chief of the political department.



# FILM REVIEWS

## LA RELIGIEUSE

AFTER THE CAUSE CELEBRE, the film itself. Jacques Rivette's *La Religieuse* (Gala) is a quiet, classically austere work, so remote from either the lewd iconoclasm suggested by the Gaullist censor's ban or from the sly malice of Diderot's novel that the fairly general chorus of disappointment which greeted it was perhaps inevitable. "What a role for Lillian Gish!" co-scenarist Jean Gruault is reported to have said. True enough—and Anna Karina does an excellent stand-in job as the innocent waif turned into hunted animal. All the same it would be a mistake to see the film simply as a pathetic tale of injured innocence, of a girl condemned to suffer a way of life for which she has no vocation. Underlying it is a bleakly uncompromising vision of the world which owes less to Diderot than to *Paris Nous Appartient*.

"We are life," says Gérard Lenz, the idealistic young theatre director of Rivette's first film, "we are those who reach out after a fatal secret." And like Gérard, Suzanne Simonin commits suicide when she finally realises that this secret is unattainable. By stripping away the careful psychological detail through which Diderot hints at his nun's motivation—her coquetry, her priggishness, her piqued self-importance—Rivette presents his Suzanne as the victim of a single, driving obsession: her need, obscure but undeniable, for liberty. When Diderot's nun finds happier surroundings with her removal to the more worldly Arpajon convent, it is only after again falling into disfavour (because her fellow nuns feel that she has bewitched the Lesbian mother superior and caused her to go mad) that she is reminded of her distaste for convent life: "Je sentis peu à peu renaître le dégoût de mon état." Rivette's Suzanne, on the other hand, even while adoring the saintly Madame de Moni, her first superior, even when enjoying her cossetting by the voluptuous Madame de Chelle at Arpajon, never retreats an inch from her position.

Inbued with a simple Christian faith, and as yet unaware of what life in the outside world may mean, she can offer no explanation for this aversion, no hope for any other way of life, beyond a simple, obstinate

(almost Existentialist) statement: "Le sacrifice de ma liberté n'était pas volontaire." Blindly reaching out for her fatal secret, she does so in a world in which the liberty she seeks cannot exist. For this is a world which has been split in two—into physical and spiritual, if you like—with a division symbolised by the iron grille which cuts the screen diagonally, lay spectators on one side, nuns on the other, as Suzanne is asked to make her vows in the opening sequence. Thereafter a heavy curtain is drawn over the grille, and the amputation is complete: two half worlds, flesh and spirit, continuing separately their barren, doomed existences. Deceptive intimations of calm and contentment filter through to either side—the happy laughter of children playing, the even tolling of the convent bell—but each remains in its own hell. And when Suzanne finally succeeds in escaping by climbing over the convent wall, she finds that she has merely exchanged her prison for another in which the hostile passions simply blow hot instead of cold.

If the streets of Paris become a strange, Kafkaesque labyrinth for Gérard Lenz, so do the convent cells and cloisters for Suzanne: a world without issue, blank walls

and serpentine corridors haunted first by the vindictive cruelties of Soeur Sainte-Christine, then by the amorous demands of Madame de Chelle, prowling the night with her Lesbian despair. The whole film, remorselessly recording an emptiness—the absence of an ideal—is enclosed, dominated by stone. Even when the cold cheerlessness of Longchamp gives way to the cosy gaieties of Arpajon, where doves coo in the cloisters, silverware glitters on the tables, and the mirrors and brocaded hangings subtly recall the bourgeois interiors of Suzanne's own home, the rough-hewn stone is not obscured. Like Madame de Chelle's Lesbian inducements, these are merely frills, designed "pour dissiper l'ennui" and unable to conceal the barrenness which lies beneath.

To this vision of fluttering humanity beating in vain against immutable stone, Rivette's calm, dispassionate camera style lends a terrible inevitability, as though nothing existed outside the confines of the frame. Barely moving, except occasionally to pan discreetly, the camera simply waits for passion to exhaust itself in fruitless struggle. Only once, after Suzanne's escape, when she realises that the priest in whom she has placed her trust intends to seduce

"LA RELIGIEUSE": ANNA KARINA, LISELOTTE PULVER, YORI BERTIN.





her, does the camera match her panic in a headlong tracking shot downstairs and through the tavern as she runs away from the abyss she has discovered. This is, if you like, Suzanne's moment of truth, the moment when she realises what liberty means and how false her dream has been. Thereafter the trap closes again, and Suzanne is as securely imprisoned by the physical as she was by the spiritual. Now a criminal, able to live only by manual labour or by selling her body, she chooses, like Gérard, to safeguard the purity of her ideal by committing suicide.

It does not do to fly in the face of a classic, and Rivette, of course, has duly been accused of betraying Diderot. But *La Religieuse* is first and foremost a personal vision; and as with *Paris Nous Appartient*, Rivette has been content to leave the audience to pick out his magnificent conception from between the lines. Here, perhaps more than in any other recent work, the style is the film; and his rigorously self-effacing classicism must have taken a lot of courage to carry through to the end.

TOM MILNE

## FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD

IMAGES OF URBAN ENGLAND are familiar enough in the cinema, but images of the countryside are oddly rare. When they do appear—as in (recently) *Accident* or *The Shuttered Room*—they're not there for their own sake. *Gone to Earth* and *Tom Jones* were attempts; but no one yet has accomplished for the open English countryside (as opposed to parkland and great houses) anything of a scale equal to what Minnelli did for the Languedoc, or *Bonnie and Clyde* for the mid-West.

Which is why *Far From the Madding Crowd* (Warner-Pathé) is so original, and must be seen. As the title suggests, Hardy's book is only partially devoted to its characters; the film takes up his larger purposes, which are to do with abstract ideas about pastoral life. From a majestic opening panning shot over the cliffs near (I think) Lulworth, Nicolas Roeg's 70 mm. Panavision camera puts Dorset on the screen to staggering effect, in different moods and weathers and at different seasons. Bathsheba Everdene leaves her aunt's cottage to return to the farm she has inherited, her pony and trap dwindling into a grey, sodden hill-mist. The camera zooms back from a flock of sheep in a field of golden stubble, and sheep, dogs and shepherd are suddenly seen in Wordsworthian perspective.

Bathsheba is woken after a night in the woods by a small boy learning his catechism: he is walking along the margin of a sunlit meadow, past a white horse rolling in the grass, horse and boy dwarfed by the shadowy bulk of gigantic trees. Bathsheba runs in diminutive long shot to meet Sergeant Troy over the steep green banks of what must be either Maiden Castle or Eggardon: a sense of history as well as of the scale of Nature lends this sequence of Troy's sword-exercises a peculiar pathos. When Troy swims out to sea and disappears, the camera's position (far out at sea, looking back at the land, and almost at the level of the waves) creates extraordinary feelings of space, nobility, and human insignificance.



"FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD": THE SHEEP-SHEARING SUPPER.

Just as the desert was the real subject of the first part of *Lawrence of Arabia*, so the Hardy country is the real subject here. Indeed, there is much in *Far From the Madding Crowd* which is close to David Lean's visual interests and sense of audience; and in making his first blockbuster it was probably natural for the careful and straightforward John Schlesinger to take Lean as his model.

The visual splendour of natural forms—hills, cliffs and sea—is supplemented by Richard MacDonald's design. The period appears to be late nineteenth century, with bathing machines on Weymouth beach, steam engines coming into use on the land but no motor cars yet in sight, and an *Oliver Twist* workhouse for the pregnant Fanny Robin to drag herself into. Faces are chosen with extreme care; extensive use is made of non-actors. It is an obtrusively painterly film, with references ranging from Hogarth (*Temperance and Soberness* Miller) to Corot and even (the sleeping reapers/the Land of Cockayne) Breughel: these allusions, together with the images of sowing, sheep-dipping and harvesting, emphasising as they do the Arcadian character of the story, create feelings both of timelessness and of a time from which an urban audience is totally cut off. It is here, it seems to me, that the specific appeal of the film lies. The actors may not all be convincing in their parts and the story may be pretty thin, but pastoral myth for the smokebound consumer is as potent as it was in the time of Beaumont and Fletcher.

But *Far From the Madding Crowd* is a modern pastoral, and the notions of time and timelessness which loom in it are typically contradictory. The film is long (169 minutes) and some people have obviously felt that it drags a little. On the other hand, a feeling of time passing is clearly essential to its purposes. Gabriel Oak has to labour in silence while Bathsheba first flirts with Farmer Boldwood, then marries Troy, then seems inclined to bow to Boldwood again. Boldwood is told by Bathsheba to wait until harvest, then to wait

until Christmas, then to wait for six years. Boldwood sits in his sparsely-furnished dining room (time is empty), staring at Bathsheba's Valentine propped between two clocks over the fireplace; he listens to footsteps in the hall, a door closing. Time is also relative: at the end, eight months after Troy's death, what to Gabriel seems to have happened yesterday was for Bathsheba finished years ago. On the other hand, the ideal state of equilibrium towards which the film moves is a condition in which time ceases to exist, of two people in a room beside a fire. As Gabriel says, "Whenever I look up, there you will be; and whenever you look up, there will I be." By repeating this line from the first reel in the last the script seems to make this classical statement of pastoral quietude even more emphatically than Hardy does.

With this minor exception, Frederic Raphael's adaptation is undemonstrative. Troy's racing becomes cock-fighting, and a sequence is invented out of his performance as Dick Turpin at the fair; otherwise the scenario stays close to the novel. Surprisingly, many of the apparently purely filmic details are there in the book: the leaves dripping on Fanny's coffin, the small boy walking behind the trees. The imaginatively staged shearing-supper sequence turns out to have been taken virtually verbatim from Hardy. At one point this fidelity results in the material not being properly absorbed (the spouting gargoyle which gushes over Fanny's grave: mystifying on the screen, fully explicable only by going back to the text), but it is an isolated instance. The real virtue of the script lies in a capable telescoping of Hardy's sprawling narrative. The rhythmical succession of short, almost motionless scenes leading up to Troy's swimming out to sea—whether it is the writer's or the director's contribution it is impossible to tell—is particularly effective in this way.

Julie Christie's Bathsheba has been criticised. It is true that she remains obstinately modern (particularly beside Fiona Walker, excellent as her maid Liddy);





"JEU DE MASSACRE": CLAUDINE AUGER, MICHEL DUCHAUSSOY.

nevertheless it is neither an easy nor a sympathetic part, and Julie Christie has the virtue of transparency—the author's intentions shine through her. Peter Finch as Boldwood (reputed to have no passionate parts) brings to his role exactly the right degree of style and schizophrenic absurdity it demands; he is the actor with greatest technical equipment and, compared to the others, who are only partly articulate, he sometimes gives the impression of speaking in verse. Terence Stamp's Troy, all flashing eyes and floating hair, makes a serious but finally unsuccessful attempt to convey a past of honey-dew and milk of Paradise. That capable actor Alan Bates as the patient Gabriel looks a little wan in a part which might have been written for a well-mannered Airedale. But, just as Christopher Plummer couldn't sink *The Sound of Music*, so shortcomings in some of the performances don't destroy *Far From the Madding Crowd*. In this careful, spectacular, and singularly beautiful film our attention is usually elsewhere.

JAMES PRICE

## JEU DE MASSACRE

ALAIN JESSUA'S *La Vie à l'Envers* was a very beguiling, rational, wary comedy about madness. Its hero didn't find life intolerable: he simply found its obligations and acceptances intolerably boring. And at the end, sitting alone in a white room, as mad as a hatter but rationally happy, he at last achieved the certainty of escape from being bothered by other people. Jessua's new film, *Jeu de Massacre* (Antony Balch), starts from other premises and arrives at other conclusions. But it is also about freedom and illusion—the facts, one might say, that we take for illusions, and the illusions we accept as facts.

Pierre (Jean-Pierre Cassel), its main character, is a realist, or so he likes to imagine. He has a small, not very profitable

talent for inventing comic strip adventures (his wife Jacqueline draws the pictures), but his own fantasies leave him entirely unengaged. He enjoys a good meal; the sorry necessity is earning the money to pay for it. And his encounter with Bob Neuman (Michel Duchaussoy), the spoilt rich boy who needs excitedly to dream out Pierre's bored fantasies, begins simply as a chance for a free dinner. Bob insists that he's being followed—dragging Pierre and a protesting Jacqueline out of a horror film just as the vampire bares its fangs. It's a jolt for Pierre to discover that he really *is* being followed; though only by a bodyguard hired by his mother to keep him out of trouble.

The cool couple join the bespectacled, spruce young fantasist for a holiday *chez Maman* on Lake Geneva. Mother is also a realist, well-insulated behind a wall of dividends from the family sweet factory. (A taking, if unlovely, scene finds Mother and Pierre in the kitchen confronting the bleeding raw material of their dinner: two sybarites who relish the mechanics of greed.) Bob zooms a child's aeroplane harmlessly around the garden, or a speedboat hazardingly around the lake. He keeps slipping off at night, with Pierre and the bodyguard trailing him in separate cars, to pursue dispiriting fantasy further at the local strip club.

Jessua's denouement involves Pierre and Jacqueline's manufacture of a new adventure strip hero—the Killer of Neuchâtel—in the likeness of a muscular, jaw-jutting Bob; and Bob's final skid over the edge of fantasy, when he kidnaps Jacqueline and tries to behave as a Killer of Neuchâtel should. Finally cornered at the top of a tower, he hallooos defiance at a small, puzzled crowd, and takes his suicide dive straight into the firemen's net. And at the end everyone is relatively happy. Jacqueline, who likes horror movies, has had her adventure; Bob is back with his toys. They all sit on their white garden chairs, looking peacefully out across the lake; but if anything, inertia has led Pierre into taking the place assigned him in Bob's dream-world.

Although this is the point the film clearly needed to reach, one could argue that Jessua betrays credibility somewhat to get there. Pierre's willingness to settle for comfort on Bob's terms is more plausible than the deliberate provocation in the creation of the Killer of Neuchâtel. But if the links of the film aren't quite as tight as those in *La Vie à l'Envers*, its speculative, detached attitude to its characters remains the same. Jessua tries people out, as it were, by giving them choices: the way Jacqueline reacts to the speedboat ride; or Pierre's glum acceptance of the role of man of action, chasing his wife all over Switzerland, while Bob's mother sits at home totting up the cost of the escapade. Bob is the only character who acts out of any compulsion; which means that he *does* act, with the half-reluctant Jacqueline as accomplice. So Jessua's theorem works itself to its tidy conclusion: the reluctant Frankenstein, as usual, trapping his monster and trapped by him.

Jessua's talent would seem to be reflective and quizzical. The scene we keep returning to in *Jeu de Massacre* is the lawn with the view of the lake, where the characters idly exacerbate each other's boredom. The comic strip action is splendidly manoeuvred, with colour changes, bursts of speed, characters cut out against neutral backgrounds, and a sound track of incoherent jabber. But these interludes are kept in their place, as scenery for a fantasy which never creeps too far into the structure of the film. Bob's bits of decor at the villa—like his spinning scarlet chair—are again given point by the setting they clash with. What makes Jessua's talent look so likeable, on the evidence of these two films, is his quite unmodish tact. The comic strip story invites all the pop art overloading that now seems so dismally second-hand. But Jessua's comedy is more abstract than pop: an affair of geometric surfaces, cool colours, an expression of an unusually detached, unusually engaging curiosity about the killing game where lines of illusion intersect.

PENELOPE HOUSTON

## COLD DAYS

IT IS NOW eleven years since the abortive uprising in Hungary, but it is only in the last few years that the effects of that uprising have begun to make themselves felt in the cinema. In *The Round-Up*, and in István Szabó's *Father*, one can detect faint glimmers of a reaction against Stalinist orthodoxy, the first stirrings of disillusionment with the collective mentality. Revolutions, in fact, are seldom entirely abortive: politically, neither of these films could have been made before 1956. And the most striking thing about András Kovács' *Cold Days* (Contemporary) is its unswerving political honesty in presenting a theme, the Hungarian army massacre in Yugoslavia of some three thousand Serbs, Jews and dissident Hungarians in the winter of 1942, which must have stirred some unpleasant memories. For corroboration, one has only to compare any number of East German films on the same theme.

*Cold Days* has no room for that kind of soul-searching. What interests Kovács is not what we can learn from wartime atrocities, or how guilty we should feel about them (no use pretending, now, that they didn't happen on this side of the fence), but more simply how they were set in



motion. We see very little of the massacre itself. What we do see is the way four men awaiting trial four years later for the part they played remember how they came to get involved. The four men, three officers and a private, pace round their white-walled prison cell convincing themselves, and each other, that their part in the massacre was accidental; the real guilt, they insist, belongs to the generals who first ordered the round-up of partisans. But their recollections, seen in a series of interlocking flashbacks, gradually reveal their own involvement in the guilt. They were bit players in a piece beyond their comprehension, each of them drawn into the action by chance, but inextricably involved by their very indifference to what happened around them.

Kovács cunningly plots these ironies of chance, piecing together apparently isolated events to stress the alarmingly casual way in which the whole confused act was committed. By looking at the massacre obliquely (planks laid across the frozen Danube, holes blasted in the ice, huddled groups waiting at the station while an officer nervously checks their identity), the film powerfully suggests how ordinary, sane men are drawn into an act of collective insanity. One of the officers concerns himself with looking for his wife, lost in the confusion created by the unseen threat of partisans; another is ordered to leave off serving tea to the frozen soldiers and help transport lorry-loads of victims to the ice; the private recalls how his patrol stomped round the town at night warming themselves with stolen drink. Each of them participates in the general chaos, numbed into acquiescence by the cold.

The cold is really the only constant factor in these nightmare days, freezing reactions until the soldiers cease to think about the implications of their actions. Soldiers' boots plod through hard-crusted snow, men disappear into a cloud of freezing mist, even the victims on the river bank huddle together against the cold as though waiting for the release of being pushed through the ice. The film keeps coming back to this focal point, a bleak, white world in which men allow themselves to be involved in murder.

Their guilt, Kovács suggests, is explained—but not mitigated—by a kind of impotence. And this is reflected in the final scene, as the men are left to stare at the white walls of their cell, waiting for their fate like helpless animals in a trap. If there is a weakness in this final scene, the dramatic device used to link the four men's stories, it detracts very little from the film's wholly mesmerising effect.

DAVID WILSON

## LA MARSEILLAISE

IN THIS PLACE and on this day starts a new era for the history of the world," wrote Goethe of the French victory over the Prussians at Valmy in the Revolutionary War; and something of the same spirit was surging through France in the Thirties when the Popular Front alliance was formed in the belief that it could defeat Fascism and that a time of happiness and prosperity was at hand. "It was a dream," says Jean Renoir, and so indeed was the French Revolution itself. But both were born of man's unending aspiration to be free, so it was natural that when he was asked to take charge of an enterprise to express the spirit

of France at that time Renoir should select the Revolution, or rather "some events leading to the fall of the monarchy," as his subject. Inevitably he saw the project in human terms rather than as a piece of historical pageantry, and chose as his leading figures a group of ordinary men from the South, using as his central rhythmic line the song they adopted from the Army of the Rhine and which became known as "La Marseillaise".

The film opens with the fall of the Bastille, and it is typical of Renoir's approach to his subject that this is presented not as a violent spectacle but as a quiet domestic interior at the court of Louis XVI. The King has just awakened after a strenuous day's hunting and has sent for food. His meal is interrupted by the news of the Bastille. "Is it a revolt?" he asks. "No, Sire, it is a revolution." A tiny scene, but what a world of subtlety is involved. Louis (Pierre Renoir), in bed and stuffing himself with chicken, is robbed of all the trappings of power—just an amiable, greedy, bumbling elderly man with no conception of the significance of the moment. The messenger La Rochefoucauld, on the other hand, is obviously an intelligent man of affairs but is treated with scant respect by the gentleman-in-waiting, who conducts him to the King with an almost insolent languor. In a few swift strokes the climate of the court has been drawn.

Now comes the other side of the coin. A poor Provençal peasant caught poaching is in danger of being condemned to the galleys. He escapes into the hills above Marseilles and here he meets two more fugitives, Arnaud, a bourgeois revolutionary, and his friend Bomier, a garrulous young mason. These two are soon summoned back to the city where they join their comrades in seizing the three forts of Marseilles from the army. The rest of the narrative follows the fortunes of these two and some of their friends as they are swept up in the gathering violence of the Revolution, eventually marching to Paris and joining the attack on the Tuileries. Counterpointing all this are scenes of the exiled aristocrats plotting at Coblenz and of the Royal Family increasing-

ly aware of their danger at court. The two threads intertwine briefly as the people storm the Palace, then part again as the King and Queen, with their children, move in a sad little procession to seek refuge in the Assembly while the Marseilles Brigade take the road for Valmy and victory. Not without loss however—they have left some of their comrades, including Bomier, dead in the streets of the capital.

Nevertheless *La Marseillaise* (Contemporary) is an optimistic film, full of hope and the joy of creation. It glows with summer sunshine as the amateur soldiers tramp the long leafy road from Marseilles to Paris, arguing, laughing and occasionally bursting into that stirring song of theirs. But it is not all revolutionary fervour and high spirits. Renoir is very conscious that the trivialities of daily life do not disappear under the stress of cataclysmic events. His soldiers suffer from sore feet, tire of their diet of potatoes and find time to fall in love. At court, too, there are human beings under the satin and paint. The puzzled King, thinking always of his food and of the chase, worrying fretfully about the angle of his wig, is a living anachronism. For him the time is out of joint and nothing in his experience has taught him to accept the fact. The Swiss Guard who stands his ground and fires the first shot at the attackers of the Palace is as firmly sure of his duty as the revolutionaries he opposes.

For Renoir there are no villains—only stupidity and misunderstanding. There are chilling moments though, when the tragedy waiting in the wings is allowed to throw its long shadow—the casual cruelty of the landowner who sets the price of a pigeon as high as a peasant's life, the women of Marseilles screaming "string up the aristocrats," the Royal Family strolling through fallen leaves on the long bitter road to the guillotine.

Technically Renoir is unobtrusive as always. It is all very simply done—or so it seems—and he handles great crowds with the same ease that he brings to intimate scenes, always choosing the most direct way of expressing his ideas without any loss of depth or subtlety. The first spine-tingling

"LA MARSEILLAISE".





sound of the "Marseillaise", for instance, comes without any introductory flourish, overheard from a neighbouring room over the excitable dialogue of a recruiting centre. Its effect is electric, and so is the insistent drumbeat that punctuates the score. There are moments of slightly indulgent sentiment, due in part perhaps to the ebullient Gallic playing of Ardisson as Bomier. But the rest of the cast are impeccably controlled, from Pierre Renoir's unforgettably bewildered King to the effortless dignity of Jouvett in the tiny part of Roederer. (The only scene now missing from this newly reconstituted version, by the way, is one in which Roederer advises the Queen to burn her brother's letters.)

In any Renoir work it is the people one remembers best, but *La Marseillaise*, with its balance between historical perspective and human values, has a sweep and a fervour that both includes and transcends the protagonists. It has nothing to do with patriotism and is as stirring to Anglo-Saxon blood as it is to the French. What is more, it has lost none of its power in the thirty years since it all began.

BRENDA DAVIES

## WHO ARE YOU, POLLY MAGGOO?

LATE IN 1965, William Klein satirised the glossy and ephemeral worlds of fashion photography, pop sociology and TV journalism. Now the glossy and elegant surfaces of his *Who Are You, Polly Maggoo?* (Contemporary) have reached England. And perhaps the fact that already they have acquired a slightly dated look should be interpreted charitably—as a measure of the degree to which Klein has penetrated his subject matter—rather than simply as an indication that Klein, once a *Vogue* photographer, fails as a satirist because he is at his best when exploiting those hollow arts he affects to expose.

PER OSCARSSON IN "HUNGER".



For while *Polly Maggoo*, with its op-art incursions and High Camp fantasies, has dated; and while its satire never really approaches the cutting edge, it does remain a very attractive and agreeable film. Watching it affords a pleasurable sensation, not unlike that induced by flicking through the pages of an expensive magazine. And indeed, for all the handheld camerawork in the TV sequences, the lasting impression left by Jean Boffety's photography is of a series of beautifully posed and beautifully composed stills.

Ostensibly the film concerns the efforts of Grégoire (Jean Rochefort), producer for *Qui Etes-Vous?*, a French television series with obvious affinities with *This Is Your Life*, to unmask the real Polly Maggoo. (Polly is a young modelling meteor, played—inevitably—by a successful young model, Dorothy MacGowan.) Grégoire's attempts to "strip away all this phony tinsel and get to the real tinsel underneath" prove essentially abortive.

Polly responds with the same professional smile to a battery of psychological tests and intensely personal questions, coming to life only in the fantasies she inspires in other people: in Grégoire, who imagines himself metamorphosed into a Ruritanian prince by Polly's first (imaginary) kiss; in Prince Igor (Sami Frey), the heir to a bizarre, Balkan Ruritania, who surrounds himself with push-button gadgets in the midst of his Gothic palace and dreams of dancing Fred Astaire style alongside a Ginger Rogers/Polly; in the magazine readers who project on to her their private sexual dreams; in the fashion writers and designers who regard her as so much raw material to be exploited. For the characters in *Polly Maggoo* are all isolated from one another. They possess not even their dreams in common.

Klein himself seems to think that the central theme in his satire of the communications media is the lack of communication in the world today. And though this theme is unlikely to emerge clearly from the mass of baroque ornamentation with which he surrounds it, the film does contain isolated details that are independently unforgettable:

the fashion show of steel-sheet dresses; the Fellini-like funeral procession; the ruthlessly preserved face of an ageing fashion editress (brilliantly played by Grayson Hall); the sociologist elucidating the foot fetishism element in the Cinderella story; and, best of all, the preview of a subsequent TV production, with the narrator's voice inquiring insidiously as the Pope blesses the crowds in St. Peter's Square, "*Qui-Etes Vous, Paul VI?*"

JAN DAWSON

## THE HAPPENING

'ANOTHER DAY and nothing is going to happen again,' confides one hipster to another at the beginning of *The Happening* (Columbia), waking up after a night under the Miami stars with a colony of fellow-thinkers. Life's a drag, so nothing for it but to stage a fantasy to fill out the long hot hours. Which is how wealthy business man Roc Delmonico comes to be kidnapped in his pyjamas. "It's all a game to you," he tells them when they pretend to play for real by demanding a huge ransom. But it's a game in which the rules are improvised. And when his appeals for help (to his wife, his mother, his business partner and his old Mafia associates) are turned down on every side, Delmonico invents some new rules and turns the game to his own advantage. Without realising it, the four hipsters have shattered the fantasy their victim has made of his life; he now rounds on them, breaks up their fantasy and becomes their Mephistopheles, using them as his agents in an orgy of revenge.

On the surface *The Happening* may look like any other freewheeling hymn to the hipster generation (and there are too many effects indulged for their own sake, too many jazzy linking scenes of cars gliding along the freeways). But like *Cat Ballou*, Elliot Silverstein's second film cuts deeper than its surface. One fantasy feeds off another: once the game is under way it has to continue until each player is cleaned out.

The theme involves several shifts of mood, and Silverstein hasn't quite managed to make the change from one mood to the next seem logical and convincing. For all its chopping and changing, a theme like this needs an internal consistency, and there are moments here when this is conspicuously lacking. Nothing wrong with the opening, though, a clever cut from the sleepy undergrowth of the beach estate (with bodies sprawled over the trees like damp clothes laid out to dry) to the frantic parody of war games when the hipsters find themselves attacked by children in full battle-dress operating frighteningly life-like tanks and thrusting home their plastic bayonets with gleeful abandon. Later scenes carry the same feeling of comedy fringed with a black edge, like Delmonico's telephone conversation with his mother ("The beautiful house you built for my old age?" she asks in response to her son's request that she should sell it to save him from his kidnappers), or with Mafia boss Sam the Tailor, first seen among a row of green-towelled mummies in a Turkish bath.

But too often a scene is overpitched or simply obtrusive. When, for instance, Delmonico and his eager lieutenants proceed to break up his elegantly appointed house, the implied comment on that peculiar American urge to destroy material possessions becomes embarrassing in the



wrong way because overstatement takes the edge off the irony. Here Silverstein displays that same tendency to force the pace which one noticed in *Cat Ballou*. The unevenness extends to the performances. Anthony Quinn manages very well the switch from bemused tolerance to Machiavellian intrigue, and the quartet of hipsters (Michael Parks, Faye Dunaway, George Maharis and Robert Walker) are very adequate. But Martha Hyer is unhappy as Delmonico's two-timing wife and as her cringing lover Milton Berle is miscast. These weaknesses apart, though, one can't help liking *The Happening*. It's a spirited film, even if at times the spirit moves erratically.

DAVID WILSON

## HUNGER

'CRIMES OF THE FUTURE,' the anaemic looking man scribbles hurriedly with a worn down pencil, and he draws a box round the words. What sort of crank is this, scurrying about the old city of Christiania (now Oslo) in the year 1890, staring at things and propping himself against embankment walls or monopolising park benches in order to jot things down? He has a habit of listening to his two shoes talking to each other, and he likes to ask policemen the time and then baffle them by either arguing or agreeing profusely with what they regard as a simple statement of fact. The achievement of Henning Carlsen's *Hunger* (Curzon) is the solid way in which it convinces us that this undoubted eccentric is the stuff of which writers, and human beings for that matter, are made. The interest of the film, which is based on Knut Hamsun's presumably semi-autobiographical novel, is almost entirely in this character, in trying to understand him, work him out, for Per Oscarsson gives him the kind of subtle performance he deserves.

The man is penniless, up from the country to try to make his way in the capital, so the whole tone of the film is dominated by his hunger. Hunger, like the capacity to write, is hard to convey visually. An audience that fails to salivate at the sight of freshly baked bread can't easily appreciate that the character in the film is getting ravenous when he looks at raw carcasses of meat. Carlsen is certainly imaginative about it. Hence such weird scenes as the one in which the writer and a large black dog bare their teeth at each other over a bone, and the dog retreats with its tail between its legs. Hence too the hunger hallucinations which are represented by dazzlingly white, over-exposed shots of the girl he desires (just slightly reminiscent of *Marienbad* this) and latterly of the writer addressing himself. Krzysztof Komeda's evocative music is mostly reserved for scenes of a hallucinatory nature.

There is no point in arguing that the film is entirely successful, but it has its qualities. The most endearing is probably its convincing portrayal of a completely un-materialistic person, for the writer gives away almost anything he acquires. His sensitivity is also convincing. An editor has accepted an article from him, subject to his toning it down, but he finds himself without a room for the night and his frantic attempts to work in impossible surroundings certainly ring true. "There are people who live on trifles, and die because of a harsh word," he tells the girl he loves when she rejects him, suddenly guessing his circumstances, soon



"THE HAPPENING": FAYE DUNAWAY, ANTHONY QUINN, MICHAEL PARKS.

after provoking him into making love to her. What ultimately makes the film so inspiring, despite its depressing theme, is probably the realisation that the writer is himself nowhere like as sensitive as this. He is so obviously cut out for survival that when hunger and adverse circumstances finally appear to triumph, and he tears up his article shouting "All is lost," and joins the crew of a ship leaving Christiania, it seems a thoroughly satisfying finish.

ELIZABETH SUSSEX

## POOR COW

POOR COW (Warner-Pathé) opens with a young woman in labour, and the newly born child is put into her arms as the credits come up. In the penultimate sequence she frantically searches the streets for the boy, now an attractive three-year-old, clutching him in hysterical relief when she finds him safe and sound. This theme of Joy's love for her son is in fact the only continuing thread in the series of incidents which make up the film. They are strung together in chronological order under chapter headings, a method which suggests fashionable influences without in itself contributing to the coherence or impact of the almost non-existent plot.

Joy is a pretty little Londoner married at eighteen to a man who promptly vanishes into prison for theft, leaving her to look after herself and their child. She forms a more mature relationship with Dave, a friend of her husband, but before long he too is sentenced for robbery with violence. She goes to live with an aunt, takes a job as a barmaid and writes long loving letters to Dave. But she is beginning to discover her power with men and her own enjoyment of it. Soon she is an amateur prostitute and doing photographic 'modelling' on the side. Although she has started divorce proceedings, she goes back to her husband when he is released, in the hope of making a home for the child. But he bullies her and will allow her no life of her own. With Dave

still in prison the future looks grim, but Joy is cheerful by nature and she faces it with fortitude.

Ken Loach, whose first feature this is, also wrote the script in collaboration with Nell Dunn, upon whose novel it is based. Both favour the semi-documentary approach, and Loach's television work has become known for its realism and social comment (*Cathy Come Home*, *Up the Junction*, *In Two Minds*). These are not unique virtues in television or the cinema, and Loach's outstanding gift is a rarer one—he has a quite astonishing rapport with actors, as was shown by the unusual authenticity of the performances in, for instance, *Cathy Come Home*. He has carried this talent over to the large screen, getting vivid character sketches from Kate Williams and Queenie Watts in supporting parts and a marvellously warm and likeable portrait from Carol White as Joy.

His touch is much less sure in organising the material, part documentary observation, part fiction, on which the performances are based. Chapter headings like 'At Aunt Em's' or 'Never Marry a Thief' are apt to look more like lazy scriptwriting than any kind of valid comment; and the final scenes, headed 'The Future' and 'My Perfect Life', turn suddenly into a sort of *ciné-vérité* with Joy talking straight at the camera as if in answer to an unseen interviewer. This confusion of method is matched by a wild rocketing of atmosphere, from the total bathos of the Welsh love scenes through the almost music-hall comedy of the 'modelling' for furtive amateur photographers, to the genuine lyricism of some of the early meetings between Joy and Dave. The gentle tone of these rare moments is charmingly counterpointed by Donovan's weary little folk/pop songs. Realism is not helped by colour, which in England always seems to prettify even the most sordid settings, and the dialogue, some of it probably improvised, sounds dull and repetitive rather than authentic. Nevertheless one feels that given a tighter script and perhaps a more urgent central theme, Ken Loach will make better and more important films.

BRENDA DAVIES





# WARRENDALE

Jan  
Dawson

**A**T ONE POINT in Allan King's film about Warrendale, the Ontario treatment centre for emotionally disturbed children, Walter Gunn, a member of the centre's staff, telephones Warrendale's director for advice. The cook in the residential house where King and his crew have been filming for the past few weeks has died unexpectedly in the night, and Walter is uncertain about the ethics, rather than simply the immediate effect, of allowing the camera crew to film the children's reactions to the announcement of her death.

"Is this intruding too much? . . . Is it going too far? . . . Would it be more natural to have them film it or not film it?" The way in which he phrases his questions is especially interesting. First, because this is the only point in the entire film at which the idea of the individual's right to privacy, of his right to preserve certain moments and experiences from public scrutiny, is even considered. Secondly, because Walter, who is of course himself being filmed at the moment of asking the question, has apparently come so far towards accepting the ubiquitousness of the camera as to feel confusedly that it

may well seem more 'natural' to the children to undergo a moment of shared but personal grief in its presence.

*Warrendale* admittedly represents an extreme case of violated privacy. The school's treatment method is very largely based on the assumption that it is important to allow people—staff and children alike—"to ventilate emotion through the stimulus of a current life experience." It is also based on the assumption that privately contained emotions are the result of repression (bad) rather than of self-control (good), and that they constitute an obstacle to that state of permanent, intensified, soul-stripped communication which Warrendale's directors apparently regard as the most honest mode of being. The children are constantly being exhorted to articulate the feelings which motivate both their physical outbursts and their occasional demands to be left alone. (Indeed, the holding technique for which the school is famous is a curious cross between the half-nelson and a mother's cajoling embrace.) And the staff are expected to attend group therapy sessions in which not merely their treatment of the



children in their charge but also the most intimate fears that haunt their—in so far as the concept of privacy is recognised—private lives are offered up as subjects for communal discussion.

Now since Warrendale is a community which aims as far as possible at abolishing conventional distinctions between 'public' and 'private'; and since, in so far as it presupposes the desirability of 'acting out' emotions, it is also a community which to a considerable degree accepts the view of life as a sustained performance, it probably provides the ideal subject matter for the *cinéma-vérité* reportage. (Television is largely responsible for the growing popularity of this type of film, and one should not forget that *Warrendale* was originally made for CBC Television.) But despite this unusual harmony of form and content; despite the producer's assurance that "... when the camera and the camera crew become a part of the community, as they did in the making of this film, you as the audience are taken into a dramatic human experience not as a spy, or interloper, but as a welcome and acceptable member of that community," *Warrendale* is likely to raise some disturbing questions in the minds of those spectators who find it hard to be convinced of their own participation in a community from which they are excluded by a wall of celluloid.

For while the camera may enable the artist to hold a more accurate mirror up to nature than any previous artistic tool has done, there are surely moments when the fact that it is a one-way mirror becomes artistically and humanly intolerable. McLuhan has observed that the world since photography has become a 'Brothel-without-Walls', and there are no doubt many people made uneasy by the role of voyeur which the camera, and in particular the motion picture camera, assigns to them.

In a sense the cinema screen may be conceived as constituting the nineteenth-century Naturalists' 'fourth wall' in a form perfected beyond the nineteenth-century imagination. But unlike the Naturalist drama, the documentary, while interposing an indestructible wall between its subject and its spectators, presents the reality lying behind that wall as fact. And whereas the physical conditions of theatrical performance may serve as constant reminders of all the art and artifice that go to create 'realistic' drama (lights, fixed sets, etc.), it is extremely easy to forget the artifice (lights, cutting, editing, etc.) which lies behind photographed reality. In the cinema, it is the performers alone (whether professional actors or 'real-life' subjects captured in their most intimate moments) who are brought into physical awareness of the paraphernalia by which the 'realistic' image is attained. The spectator is merely brought into a curious state of non-participatory contact with an image of a reality at least as elusive as Plato's.

And when the camera—as it seems increasingly to do—chooses to focus his attention on other people's essentially private nightmares (ranging from the lonely girl masturbating in a Warhol film, to the anguished faces of Aberfan parents on a TV newsreel, to the heart-rending cries of the disturbed children in *Warrendale*), there are surely many spectators who experience an acute discomfort and self-disgust at the realisation that what the screen is offering them is people, removed from them in space and, usually, in time; people whose very real grief, which it is not in their physical power to alleviate, may offer itself almost casually for their scrutiny at some time between *Coronation Street* and the *David Frost Programme*.

Obviously a series of distinctions must be made at this point. The distinction between the documentary whose primary purpose is to educate; and the reportage which is content to stimulate a vague, undirected awareness. The distinction between the legitimate news programme which provides an immediate and concrete image of the social and political events affecting the spectator's life, events for which he is in part responsible and which he can hope in some small degree to modify by his actions and attitudes; and the reportage which offers nothing beyond the vicarious experience of other people's tragedies (the difference here is surely between photographing the devastation of Aberfan, the town,

and photographing the reactions of those parents who lost their children in the disaster). The distinction between live and edited reporting.

One of the most unsatisfactory aspects of King's film is in fact the absence of documentation. The film itself (as distinct from the handout which was distributed at its press show) offers virtually no information about either the theories behind the centre's treatment methods or their effectiveness. Possibly this is intended to stimulate the spectator's curiosity, to compel him to find out more, not just about Warrendale, but about the very real problem of how society should, and does, treat its disturbed children. But *Warrendale* begins with a short text in which King disclaims any didactic purpose and affirms that what he offers is simply "a personal, selective record of a few events we experienced." So that the film's immediate impact is simply to plunge the spectator into the emotionally involving, physically disturbing spectacle of a mass hysteria whose therapeutic effects are neither demonstrated nor described.

Undoubtedly, film today is equipped as never before for its role of offering us a mirror on the world. The use of the hand-held camera, the reduced weight of essential sound equipment, enables film-makers to bring any human drama they choose into our living rooms or into public cinemas. We can now participate vicariously in the disasters of every nation—acts of God and acts of man alike—witness the assassination of a Presidential assassin taking place 'live' in our own homes, watch a national celebrity break down before the cameras as his friendly interviewer—almost one of the family—asks with a seeming lack of prurient interest for more precise details of his impending divorce. But whether the cumulative effect of such experiences is either broadening or dynamic is highly questionable—particularly when they are sandwiched between seductive invitations to partake of the most evolved material goodies that our consumer society has yet produced. Is it not quite probable that the cumulative effect of witnessing so many disasters and so many private tragedies is in the long run a deadening one? That viewers may find it increasingly hard to make any qualitative distinction between the image from Vietnam and the image of the shining washing-machine that immediately precedes it?

But to return more specifically to *Warrendale*, and to assume that the film is seen under the optimum conditions which, ironically, its brush with national television authorities has imposed upon its showing (that is to say, seen in isolation, rather than in a context of surrounding programmes; by people who have chosen to see it rather than people who have simply forgotten to turn off their sets): surely the assumption that there is inevitably something socially responsible about spreading 'awareness', something edifying and morally purifying about feeling more 'aware'—regardless of the object of this awareness—is a dangerous one. (It may even lead to a state in which people view the world's problems as so many stamps to be filed away on the appropriate page of their albums: a state as contemptible to the real reformer as the 'token demonstration' is to the real revolutionary.)

Indeed, responsible newspapers are curiously schizophrenic on this question of awareness, deprecating the quest for an 'expanded consciousness' which according to many more articulate users lies behind the growing experimentation with hallucinogenic drugs; heaping derision on neophyte practitioners of Transcendental Meditation; yet lauding a film like *Warrendale* because of its power to exhaust and shatter, its power to expand the spectator's consciousness and awareness. The obvious objection to this argument is of course that there is a world of difference between an enlarged perception of a social problem and a heightened consciousness of, let us say, the patterns formed by laundry rotating in a front-loading washing-machine. But if awareness of a social problem stops at the voyeuristic stage, if a harrowing human drama produces nothing beyond an increased flow of adrenalin and some unexploited sympathy, is there really any justification for



regarding it as more responsible or more constructive than the kind of awareness produced by psychedelic lights?

This is not to deny that *Warrendale* is a deeply disturbing and profoundly moving film. It *does* expand one's awareness of the reality that lies behind the label 'emotionally disturbed'; and, perhaps unintentionally, by showing the staff at their most humourless (and to my mind antipathetic), it does force one into a sympathy with these particular children that at times borders on identification. They emerge very clearly as individuals deserving of attention, in need of affection and understanding. But at the same time *Warrendale* is a film which defies discussion inside any established critical framework, and this seems to be a result of its own shortcomings rather than those of existing critical methods.

\* \* \*

For to judge the film on its artistic merits, to assess it in terms of the quality of its images or its sound recording, to object to the way its material is structured, is to lay oneself open immediately to a charge of cold-blooded cynicism. More enthusiastic spectators will immediately point out that it is unfeeling if not downright immoral to maintain this kind of critical detachment when one is dealing with the spectacle of real people experiencing real emotions that are both painful and important to them. They may even ask with some justification whether the director could seriously be expected to invite a disturbed child to start her tantrum again from the beginning, so as to improve on the composition of the picture.

But to accept this kind of argument is to lose sight of the fact that if *Warrendale* is not to be judged as art, it is not to be judged as reality either. It cannot be judged as reality in so far as the hundred minutes for which it runs were edited from forty hours of film shot over a five-week period; because King, and his editor Peter Moseley, in choosing the hundred minutes most likely to engage an audience's attention, have tended to select dramatically compelling incidents (like the death of the cook) which occasionally smack of sensationalism; and because they have structured their selected moments. Periods of calm (the children's bedtime story, the birthday cake, the children at play) alternate with the more violent and hysterical demonstrations. And finally *Warrendale* cannot be judged as reality in so far as for most people reality is not synonymous with living one's life in front of a camera. Aren't the staff members at all conscious of the cameras, more self-conscious (inhibiting) or exhibitionistic (distorting) than usual? Aren't some of the children for at least some of the time aware of the camera, don't they sometimes misbehave simply to attract its attention?

These questions—about the possibility of recording any

reality with a piece of equipment which is not itself an integral part of that reality—obviously apply not just to *Warrendale* but to the whole field of *cinéma-vérité*. But the disturbing thing about *Warrendale* is the way in which the film itself implicitly denies their existence.

The extent of this denial becomes immediately apparent if one compares King's study with *Chronique d'un Été* by Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin. Here a framework for the 'reality' that lies at the centre of the film is provided by two discussions. *Chronique* opens with the directors asking one of their subjects whether what she says and does is likely to be affected by the presence of a camera, and she replies that it will probably make her nervous; so that throughout the film the spectator remains on his guard, conscious of watching people who know that they are being watched. A second discussion occurs after the subjects have been shown the rushes of the film in which they are to appear. Some of them are appalled by the film, finding it immodest and embarrassing, accusing other participants of hypocrisy or exhibitionism; others express delight at the intimate knowledge of total strangers which the film has brought them. And their discussion is followed in turn by a third discussion between the two directors, in which Rouch sums up all the limitations of *cinéma-vérité* as a genre by observing that "to get results, people have to be on the verge of a nervous breakdown—and that's artificial."

It is precisely this note of self-consciousness that raises *Chronique d'un Été* from a voyeuristic study of other people's happiness and despair to an instructive exploration of the limits of realism in art. Its people and their problems are no less real and involving than those in *Warrendale*; but the directors respect them (and the spectator's intelligence) enough to suggest that the facet of reality which the spectator can see has been in part shaped by the medium through which he sees it.

Without this kind of critical framework, the probing presence of the camera at *Warrendale* remains embarrassing and even misleading. So that when, in an extraordinarily moving scene, one of the children asks a staff member why they have always to talk about her feelings, instead of playing the way they used to; when she is told that deeper things are more important, and objects that "deeper things hurt too much," her comment somehow illuminates everything that is wrong with the film and with the sticky communion it aims at establishing. It is obviously hard to define the point at which a selfless concern to share in another person's suffering or happiness turns to prurient curiosity. But one wishes all the same that King had at least attempted a definition.

"WARRENDALE".





# FILM CLIPS

THERE IS SOMETHING instantly familiar about Albert Lewin's New York flat, grandly overlooking Central Park. The ranges of books and musical scores, the pre-Columbian ceramics, the modern primitive paintings, the ancient Egyptian and Minoan fragments, crowding every available inch of wall, table and shelf. What do they remind one of? What but the world of his own films, the sort of surroundings, both rich and strange, in which live the wise and cultivated archaeologists in *Pandora and the Flying Dutchman* or *The Living Idol*, the crusading doctor bent on bringing modern medicine to witch-haunted Morocco in *Saadia*. With Albert Lewin, uniquely in the modern American cinema, the work is the man: to meet him and to see how he lives, one can only wonder at the extraordinary accuracy with which, in the mere six films he has directed, from *The Moon and Sixpence* in 1942 to *The Living Idol* in 1957, he managed to carry over intact the flavour of his own personality and his own vision of an ideal life.

Since *The Living Idol*, ill-health and a less sympathetic generation in Hollywood have kept him away from the studios—apart from an abortive attempt to make something serious out of *The Naked Maja*, of which not a word or idea was used in the film as shot. He has written a novel, *The Unaltered Cat*, which affords another insight into his private world, and at 75 he remains a sharp, lively, and cheerfully malicious raconteur on the subject of Hollywood and its foibles.

One of the few successful producers who has subsequently made good as a director, Lewin worked for years with Thalberg, who constantly dissuaded him from directing. Thalberg's death decided him to leave Metro; and he owed his first chance to his partnership with a producer whose eagerness to film *The Moon and Sixpence* was limited only by the need to do it as cheaply as possible. Hence Lewin found himself required not only to produce, but also to write and direct. He seized the opportunity, the result was a critical and commercial success, and all seemed set. Then his financier-producer drifted off into war work, and he was left jobless. But he had friends at Metro, and one of them, Sidney Franklin, showed *The Moon and Sixpence* to Louis B. Mayer. After a long silence, Mayer opined, "It's a fine movie. A pity it wasn't



"THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY". REGINALD OWEN, ANGELA LANSBURY, HURD HATFIELD.

made by a nice guy instead of that son-of-a-bitch." However, Lewin was back on the payroll.

None too happily at first. He was assigned *Madame Curie*, the big new prestige production for Metro's current hottest properties, Greer Garson and Walter Pidgeon. And after ten days he was fired. "I thought I was going mad. I just couldn't make these people come to life. Perhaps I couldn't direct at all. Mervyn LeRoy took over, and I used to sneak on to the set, to see if I could divine the great mystery to which he must have the key. I never managed to find out!" But one producer at Metro had confidence; improbably enough it was Pandro S. Berman. Berman offered him six finished scripts. He returned them all. Berman wanted to know why. "I told him that five were excellent and should make successful films, but that I would drop the remake of *If Winter Comes*. He went ahead and made them all, and the only one which flopped was *If Winter Comes*. So he was left unwillingly admiring of my business acumen. I explained to him, though, that obviously it was no use for me to do anything I didn't believe in. When he was unwise enough to ask what sort of project I could believe in, I handed him the book of *Dorian Gray*."

Somewhat to Lewin's surprise others at the studio saw possibilities in *Dorian Gray*, and he was given the go-ahead. Not, alas, for the most exciting possibility: "One day I received a message from Cedric Gibbons, who wanted to see me on a matter of urgency and secrecy. Gibby was the only close friend of Garbo around the studio at that time, and he had been deputed to tell me that Garbo wanted to play Dorian. Indeed, it was the only role she would come back to the screen for. Of course I moved heaven and earth to set it up. But everyone had a fit: the censorship problem, formidable anyway, would become insurmountable with a woman *en travesti* playing the role. I had to give up, but I've always regarded that as one of the screen's great lost opportunities."

The film went forward, not without difficulties since it ran over schedule and budget. Once Berman spent most of the day watching Lewin set up just one characteristically complex shot: that which starts on Dorian, inclined to be contrite for ill-using poor innocent Angela Lansbury and writing her a letter, then moves over to George Sanders, who turns and walks away from the camera to deliver the crucial information that the girl has killed herself, then turns back at last, cynically, to observe the effect of his words. Berman watched all this with some mystification, then took Lewin aside. "Al, I don't see why you're complicating things for yourself. This guy's telling his friend the very sad and tragic news that his girl has died. Why don't you do it in a nice two-shot on the sofa, with over-shoulder close-ups?" Lewin felt there wasn't much point in explaining at length, so he said, "Well, Pan, that's my style, you see." Berman was puzzled. "Style, style, people are always talking about style. What is this style?" Lewin explained that it was the quality which told you at once that a Lubitsch film was by Lubitsch, or if you turned on a radio to Wagner made sure you knew at once it wasn't Mozart or Bach. Berman reflected. "Oh, so that's style. Well, I don't want it in any of my movies."

As a matter of fact, the point of having a key line delivered back to the camera was more than just 'style'. It reflects a consistent feeling on Lewin's part that to show people talking on screen while you hear what they are saying is nearly always enfeebling. "I really only caught on to the implications of what I'd been doing at the end of my career, when it was too late. But I think I now have the answer, which I offer freely to anyone who wants to use it. Nowadays so much filming is post-synchronised: the film and the sound are separately conceived and artificially combined afterwards. But these separate creations are done in the wrong order. The thing to do is to record a perfect track first, and then get the actors to perform to a playback for the cameras. With my method you would need a minimum of lip-





"PANDORA AND THE FLYING DUTCHMAN"; JAMES MASON, AVA GARDNER.

synch, and the difference this makes to the sharpness and rhythm of the playing is fantastic. I've done it in bits and pieces in all my films, particularly with the narration in *Dorian Gray*. I would have liked so much to try it throughout in just one film . . ."

DID YOU KNOW that James Whale directed a film as late as 1949? I would not have known were it not for *Films in Review*, that great repository of miscellaneous cinematic information. The film was a forty-minute version of Saroyan's play about a lynching, *Hello Out There*, starring Henry Morgan

and Marjorie Steele, and was produced by Huntington Hartford, at that time Marjorie Steele's husband. It was meant as part of an episodic film on the model of Hartford's earlier *Face to Face*, but the other episodes never materialised and this one was shelved, partly, it was said, because neither Hartford nor Miss Steele was happy with her performance. I always wondered what had happened to the film, especially since Huntington Hartford's New York Gallery of Modern Art has, through the work of Raymond Rohauer, taken up the cinema in such a big way. My curiosity was finally satisfied recently when I learned that Mr.

HENRY MORGAN AND MARJORIE STEELE IN "HELLO OUT THERE".



Rohauer had come across the film, on the verge of decomposition, had it copied, and was at last going to give it its premiere at the Gallery, nearly twenty years after it was made.

And very strange it is. The play, perhaps you remember, is virtually a two-character piece about a man in prison for having, allegedly, attacked a woman, and the local girl, part-time prison cook, to whom he confides his dreams and with whom he plans to escape. It is written in Saroyan's most florid and tiresome manner—it is quintessentially the sort of play actor and actress characters in films are always briefly glimpsed playing in. What Whale thought of it is difficult to guess; but what he made of it is something unmistakably personal. It becomes in his hands a virtuoso pattern of light and shade, a piece of fully blown expressionist film-making plonked down unceremoniously in the midst of neo-realism's heyday.

The set (designed, apparently, by Whale himself) is a large barred cell with the front grill canted forward, quite unrealistically, at an angle of 45 degrees. There is no visible light source, apart from a pale window at the back, yet every shot is turned into a virtually abstract composition of bars, black shadows, and gleaming white highlights. Sometimes the lighting effects are very complex, as with the appearance, near the end, of the 'wronged' husband who finally kills the prisoner. His face is left in complete darkness, though isolated in a pool of light, except for a tiny spectral glow of reflected light just around his eyes. And the conclusion, with the arrival of the lynch mob and the setting-up of an improvised group of bearers to carry the body away, is at once recognisable as the work of the same man who devised the crowd scenes in *Frankenstein*.

How did this film come about? What made Huntington Hartford think it a good idea to bring Whale back to the screen after some eight years absence? Hartford cannot now remember, James Whale is dead, and nobody else seems to know. But whatever the reasons, Whale enthusiasts can only be glad it happened, and look forward, now that the film is safe and sound, to a chance of seeing it for themselves.

"STOP? SHE DOESN'T KNOW the meaning of the word!" The usually bland Peter O'Toole was looking a trifle fraught, and tugging occasionally at grey tufts which did not, or were not seen to, scatter his luxuriant dark hair in *Great Catherine* six months ago. He claims, cheerfully but not altogether frivolously, that they are the first effects of being subjected to another great Katharine, Katharine Hepburn, in a new historical film, *The Lion in Winter*, which incidentally hoists Anthony (*Dutchman*) Harvey up into the super-production class.

Meanwhile, the lady in question was chattering away with the utmost enthusiasm about almost every subject which came into her head ("Except the film, of course," murmured one of the publicity men resignedly). Like the pleasures of cycling round Regent's Park, of acting on stage ("Well, then I did an Old Vic tour of Australia with Bobby Helpmann; you know, as far away from home as they could get us"), of winter swims and life tucked away in the wilds of New England. Ah, said someone, now that was a point. Why did she have this reputation for being a recluse



and never talking to anyone, when evidently . . . ?

"I suppose when I was a young actress I was very unsure of myself, and I thought you had to be nice to everybody, so I was. Then I got to be a big star rather quickly, and it occurred to me that you didn't, so then I was very difficult with the press and everybody. Then after a while, things didn't go so well, so I decided it was time to be sweet again. And by that time the press and I had got to be rather old and sweet together. You know, when someone has been around as long as I have, people get fond of you, like some old building. I suppose they say to themselves, well, if she wants to take up this pose of being a great recluse, a mysterious solitary, let's indulge her a little . . ."

When I arrived, she was in full spate about *Alice Adams*. "... and I had this great affection about wanting to be directed by someone who really cared for this great Booth Tarkington novel. And I couldn't find anyone that suited, until one day I met George Stevens. At that time he was making Wheeler and Woolsey comedies, but we talked for some time—well, I guess I talked—and I thought how intelligent he was, what sound ideas he had on the subject. So I went to Pandro S. Berman, who was producing, and told him I was determined to be directed by this new young man. Berman was delighted to have a director he could pay in hundreds instead of thousands of dollars, so it was fixed. Then we had the first story conference. You know George Stevens, you know how he looks? He's part American Indian, with this great stone face. All through the conference he just sat there, not saying a word. And I thought to myself, Oh God, you've really done it this time. You've picked some dummy without a thought in his head, and now you'll be too stubborn to say so. Anyway shooting went on, and it all turned out very well. And months later, when I knew George much better, I asked him why he didn't say anything at that conference. He said: 'The truth is, I was scared to death. You kept going on about this marvellous book and how we had to be absolutely faithful to it, and I didn't dare say I'd never read it.'"

The lady cherishes few illusions about her illustrious past. Of *Mary of Scotland*: "Of course Jack Ford is marvellous to work

with. But I never could stand Mary Queen of Scots—such a silly woman. Queen Elizabeth—now there's a part I'd have liked to play." Of *The Little Minister*: "I didn't really want to play it until I heard another actress was desperate for the role. Then of course it became the most important thing in the world for me that I should get it. Several of my parts in those days I fought for just to take them from someone else who really wanted them. Well, it wasn't really me, was it? Still, it did teach me a bit of a lesson: to pick roles because I wanted to play them rather than because other people did."

Eleanor of Aquitaine in the new film she knew at once she wanted to play. Likewise the Madwoman of Chailot, which she will do immediately after under the direction of John Huston. Coco Chanel? "That was a big build-up over nothing. I don't know if I'm going to play it or not. No one has asked me. One thing I do know: Rosalind Russell's husband owns the property, so if she wants to play it, she'll play it." We said that anyway we were relieved that reports of her retirement after the as yet unseen *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?*, with Spencer Tracy, were obviously quite unfounded. "Retire? No, I'd never retire. Don't believe in it. And if you decide you're going to, don't talk about it. It's a dull move . . ."

SADDEST NOTE of the current quarter is the closing of the Plaza for reconstruction. There will still be a cinema on the site: in fact two smaller cinemas opening in the spring in the existing building. But whatever they are like, they will never be able to take the place of the Plaza as we have known and loved it, the last of the real picture palaces left in central London.

It has been with us since 1926, when it opened with a flourish and Dorothy Gish as *Nell Gwynn*, directed by Herbert Wilcox. Everyone was besought to "Start Saying Plaza," and apparently lots of people did. More than that, they started going there, drawn no doubt mainly by the films, but also to some extent by the atmosphere of discreet luxury which pervaded the place, what with the elaborate gilded decor, hopefully described as "Italian Renaissance" and actually Hollywood Venetian baronial,

about thirty years B.C. (Before Corman). It is encouraging to learn that the odds and ends of antique furniture, including "a three-compartment Italian walnut seat originally a church throne," were all specially brought from Italy, and that some of the light fittings, though converted to electricity, were genuine antique Venetian. The original foyer carpet, 16 by 78 feet, was specially hand-woven in Czechoslovakia, and replaced ten years ago by a replica.

Now, alas, all that splendour is headed for the breaker's yard. Inevitable, I suppose, but sad, because it signals in a very palpable way the disappearance of West End cinema-going as a particular plushy sort of event. True, some of the new cinemas are attractive, but some of them aren't—witness the grimness of the new Curzon after the beauty (and utility) of the old. But no one could pretend that the new Empire or the new Gaumont (now Odeon) Haymarket, or even the new Warner or the new Odeon, Marble Arch, gives one quite the same feeling as the old. And where in these bright, fast-fading new cinemas can one hope for an organ that will actually come up out of the floor and has to be played by a living hand? At the party which mourned the disappearance of the old Plaza intrepid critics were actually permitted to ride on the organ, and a friend's last glimpse was of the critic of *The Morning Star* manfully picking out "The Red Flag" on it. Somehow a pirate tape sneaked into the Musak just wouldn't be the same thing at all.

"THE MOST LOATHSOME, repellent story to ooze its way across the screen for many a year . . . all the more brutish and vile for the undoubted brilliance of director Peter Collinson. He has extracted disturbingly good portrayals from Suzy Kendall, Norman Rodway, Tony Beckley and Terence Morgan. *Daily Mirror*. Slick, glossy, rivetingly nasty. *The Observer*. An exercise in violence, sick jokes, sadism, degeneracy and terror. *Sunday Mirror*."

No, it is not an attack on *Penthouse* by malicious rivals. That is what they paid to put in the papers to advertise its presence at the Curzon. Must be a moral there somewhere, but I prefer not to think it out.

ARKADIN

## LONDON FESTIVAL: LE DEPART

continued from page 12

us what was at the end of the line. Léaud puts all the vehemence and aggression of a freedom-fighter into his hunt for a vehicle, and to this extent is clearly linked with the belligerent Skolimowski image; at the same time, that image has softened so considerably that his frantic violence seems merely a combination of excess enthusiasm and ludicrously anti-social eccentricity. In a Polish environment it might have worked; in a curiously non-specific Belgian one it just comes out as cute.

Skolimowski's comedy, then, is not so much a departure as a modification. Apart from such tiny relics of Polanski-style humour as the trampish sausage-vendor, his Polishness has become submerged in a welter of international influences, including Wilder, Lester and Forman, and while there is plenty of glossy self-indulgence (like the persistent close-ups of the bikini fashion parade), there is nothing really to equal the ski-run sequence in *Barrier*, the superb long-distance ten-minute take in *Walkover*, or that startling shot in *Rysopis* which takes us all the way down a flight of stairs. Dominating everything in *Le Départ*, of course, is the Godard touch, at its heaviest when we see a photograph of the director's wife

on a wall or when someone reads a newspaper headed 'Cinéma', but also apparent in the handling of the pawnshop scene and in Léaud's party trick of shoving a safety-pin through his elbow as a bit of casual one-upmanship.

Fortunately, the film nevertheless gets along very nicely as sheer farce in its own right, with Léaud's melodramatics, all angles and outrage, and Komeda's cool soundtrack, both raging away at full pitch. The scene in which boy and girl sit slapping each other in the boot of a car is a delicious piece of improvisation, while his incessant battles with all sorts of adversaries (such as the helmeted motor-cyclist he has run down almost without noticing, or the escort of the woman he hopes will lend him a car in return for guessed-at but still unexpected services) have a pleasingly cumulative absurdity. Skolimowski's visual flair, although muted, occasionally produces some spectacular shooting, especially of Porsches at high speed, and his taste for symbolism (wigs, mirrors, projected images, recurrent references to things Indian) has clearly not yet abandoned him. But if *Le Départ* adds anything to what we already knew about Skolimowski, it proves mainly that he is currently more inspired in his bitterness than in his jokes.

PHILIP STRICK



# BOOK REVIEWS

**FILM CENSORS AND THE LAW**, by Neville March Hunnings. Illustrated. (Allen and Unwin, 63s.)

THE COMMON LAW of England has its provisions dealing with obscene acts in public, sedition and conduct likely to cause a breach of the peace. Those accused of transgressing it are entitled to a public trial, representation by Counsel and, in most cases, the decision of twelve ordinary citizens. There is a right of appeal and no prosecution takes place until after an offence has been committed. Our legal system, nothing to be ashamed of as legal systems go, is thought sufficient to regulate the writing and publication of books and newspapers. According to the report of a recent powerful and widely representative Parliamentary Commission it is adequate to control the theatre also. The cinema, however, is still lumbered with censorship.

Censorship is beyond, and in certain cases contrary to the law. It seeks to apply vague standards of 'public morality' 'social good' (often identical with the interests of an established government) even, most misguided of all, 'artistic integrity' to what would otherwise be the subjects of free speech. It is imposed in secret, usually with no right of appeal, by bodies whose principles cannot be clearly ascertained or publicly questioned. It forbids the act before it is done, in contrast to the law which can only act to stigmatise crimes already committed. In an open society it is hard to see how it can possibly be justified.

The great supporters of pre-censorship have always been the promoters, the theatre managers and film production companies. For understandable financial reasons they want a rubber stamp, a certificate of good behaviour and eager conformity, which will protect them from the risk of legal prosecution once the film or play is shown. It matters little to them if dialogue is cut or scenes lacerated before the rubber stamp is applied. In less worthy cases they like to be sure how costly erotic they can safely be before a film is shown in public. Not unnaturally, directors and writers view the matter differently. Their desire is to see their work unmutated. They care more for freedom of expression than the safety of the investment: without a great financial stake in the production, they are prepared to take their chances with the law. In the theatre the artists have won their battle; the comforting rubber stamp is to go, and theatre managers must now try to be as brave as the publishers of books.

However, film companies are still clinging to the apron strings of their tolerant, well-meaning, socially conscious old Nanny—the British Board of Film Censors—who, advised by the most popular psychiatrists, is quite sure she knows what's good for them. "Why shouldn't we trust Nanny?" the wealthy children cry. "She may well be right about our running naked through Kensington Gardens (keeping the knickers on is *much* sexier) and after all, we do pay the old dear's wages."

Historically, the reason for the British film industry setting up its own pre-censorship committee is understandable. It had to protect itself from attacks on all sides by local authorities who had got into the censorship act by a dubious legal decision. The story is clearly told by Neville March Hunnings in his *Film Censors and the Law*, a prodigiously detailed, admirably documented account of the subject in all countries where governments have tried to cope with what they seem to regard as the almost supernatural and probably subversive power of the screen.

British movies started off in the Music Halls, where everyone was happily corrupted by *Courtship* and *The Honeymoon Trip* without official interference. Censorship really grew out of the realisation that film is very inflammable (in the most literal sense), and the Cinematograph Act of 1909 gave local authorities the power to grant licences to cinemas only when they were confident that adequate fire precautions existed. The authorities interpreted this

to mean they could impose other special conditions on the running of cinemas, and the LCC used the Act to forbid Sunday showings. Although a magistrate held that this was going too far, the Divisional Court, by a decision which opened the floodgates of censorship (LCC v. Bermondsey Bioscope Ltd., 1911), in effect gave local councils wide powers to impose conditions on cinemas as including approval of the films. By 1910, they were deciding that newsreels of prize-fights (in particular the Johnson-Jeffries battle in which a negro was seen to beat a white man) were undesirable and obscene. It was from an instinct of self-protection, therefore, that the film industry erected its own censor; although the powers of local authorities, stemming from what may well have been a misconception of a fire precaution act, are still concurrently, and more or less arbitrarily, exercised.

The early Board of Film Censors, once appointed, went to work with a will. T. P. O'Connor, their President from 1919 to 1923, listed forty-three rules by which he not only banned 'cruelty to animals', 'unnecessary exhibition of underclothing' and 'indelicate sexual situations', but 'subjects dealing with India in which British officers are seen in an odious light . . . attempting to suggest the disloyalty of Native States' and 'all references to controversial politics' together with films about the 'Relations of Capital and Labour'. It is a common error to suppose that Censors are only or primarily interested in obscenity. The tendency of any Censor is to induce political and social conformity, and his objects are surprisingly unchanging. It was the same spirit that recently led the Lord Chamberlain to object to Peter Brook's theatrical production *U.S.* because he found it, in an apparently ascending order of horror, 'bestial, anti-American, and left-wing'. Between the wars, the Film Censor managed to ban a film by Herbert Wilcox about Nurse Edith Cavell as it was thought it might offend the Germans. Anti-Nazi films were also banned. "The British Censor never allows the Lord's Prayer," appears to be one of the few consistent statements of policy.

The British Board of Film Censors is now said to exercise its functions in an enlightened manner, and to be staffed by the sort of amiable clubmen who are able to swap a blue joke in Wardour Street. The same was said of the Lord Chamberlain, but the Parliamentary Commission was unable to accept his undoubted bonhomie as a defence for an indefensible office. The recent decisions of the BBFC seem to me to point to the Film Censor's misconception of his role. Two films were made recently about LSD. The first, the Censor said, was a bad film, so he felt no doubt about banning it. The second, *The Trip*, made by a distinguished director, was apparently a good film but also banned as 'anti-social'. These decisions seem to be unjustifiable. LSD is a fact of life, indeed—an important contemporary problem. We are allowed to speak about it or write books or articles describing its effects. The book or article will not be censored merely because it is biased or inaccurate; most books and articles are. If a book is allowed, why not a good film; and if a good film—why, in the name of adult sanity, not a bad film? The process of censorship proceeds on the continual assumption that we are incapable of making up our own minds.

Curiously enough it is the Americans who have to grapple most with the philosophy of censorship, the right to free speech being written into the First Amendment of their Constitution. This has led to a number of fascinating judgments in the Supreme Court, widely quoted in Mr. Hunnings' book, in which the Constitution and local censorship are seen in conflict. Free speech, the Supreme Court decided, in *Schenck v. U.S.* (1919), should only be suspended in cases of 'clear and imminent danger', an analogy being said to be when a man shouts 'fire' in a theatre and causes a murderous stampede for the exit. If we also allow the audience the right of deciding whether the place is on fire or not, this is a definition of censorship which might be acceptable.

American Law has also taken a firm line with officials who set themselves up as judges of artistic merit. In *Hannegan v. Esquire* (1946) the Postmaster General, who took a dim view of *Esquire* magazine, tried to prevent it being posted at a reduced rate. "What seems to one to be trash," Judge Douglas said firmly, "may have for others fleeting or enduring value." And in another magazine case, the Supreme Court said, "What is one man's amusement, teaches another's doctrine. Though we can see nothing of any possible value to society in these magazines, they are as much entitled to the protection of free speech as the best of literature. They are equally subject to the control if they are lewd, indecent, obscene or profane." In short, free speech should not be confined to poets; it is equally the right of the inarticulate, the wrong-headed and the bore.

Mr. Hunnings has written a fascinating text book, and a pathetic account of the official attempt to catch and circumscribe the wildest of public dreams. Although clearly liberal, he lacks a sense of outrage, and his acceptance of British Censorship is, to me, too



complacent. In Belgium, it appears, there is no adult censorship at all, but children are prevented from seeing certain films. The risk of alarming children is probably the only justification for any classification of films, although our present censor constantly gives X certificates to those horror films which have ever been childhood's staple diet. For children I would suggest a single twelve-year-old adviser, capable of understanding his contemporaries' taste. The rest of us, surely, can make do with the law, and our inalienable right as an audience, to make up our own minds.

JOHN MORTIMER

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**MOTION PICTURES FROM THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS PAPER PRINT COLLECTION 1894-1912**, by Kemp R. Niver, edited by Bebe Bergsten. University of California Press. \$27.50. (Cambridge University Press, 220s.)

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FOR EIGHTEEN YEARS, between Edison's first films for the Kinetoscope and the ratification of the motion picture copyright law in 1912, many film producers distributing their properties in America adopted the practice of making paper bromide contact prints of their films and depositing them with the Library of Congress Copyright Office. In this way a collection of over 3,000 of these *incunabula* survived. Between 1953 and 1965 (under a programme initiated at the request of the Library of Congress by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, and completed with a Government grant) the whole lot were transferred on to 16 mm. film, under the supervision of Kemp R. Niver, thus making them available again, after half a century, in the form of motion pictures.

The collection clearly represents the most important and comprehensive existing primary source of information about the primitive period of cinema. Other things being equal, the prints of individual films are likely to be the most authoritative versions extant. And next best to the films themselves is Mr. Niver's painstaking catalogue, with its precise and evocative content summaries and its conscientious researching of credits for pictures that were mostly issued without them—an incomparable tool for any researcher in an area so much of whose history has till now been simply hearsay.

The catalogue entries themselves are impeccable. The indexing is surprisingly haphazard in method. It seems in the first place duplication to classify the main catalogue entries alphabetically under broad and often overlapping categories (Advertising, Comedy, Drama, Reproductions, Vaudeville and so on) in addition to a series of indexes under further style and subject classifications together with a general alphabetical index of titles. Index classifications often seem arbitrary to the point of the bizarre. While sporting subjects, for instance, are minutely analysed, the heading 'Machinery' can cover anything from *The Adjustable Bed* and *President McKinley's Funeral to Californian Oil Wells and Ice Yachting*. The most strikingly unhelpful section of the main entries is the heading 'Comedy (Another Version)' which lists alternative versions of films, frequently simply duplicating the main entry which appears under 'Comedy', with no indication of the nature of the variants or the chronology of the two versions.

But you can, with a certain amount of annoyance (not minimised by the high price of the book which, but for the duplications occasioned by the arrangement of the entries, might at least have allowed for a few illustrations), overcome the oddities of the cataloguing. And it is worth it, of course, if only for the 300 Griffith titles; or the three dozen Méliès films; or the wealth of actuality material; or the shake-up of technical history threatened by the entries under 'Photography—Unusual Camera Uses'; or such items of (too long neglected) erotica as *Airy Fairy Lillian Tries on her New Corsets* or *Poor Girl, It was a Hot Night and the Mosquitos were Thick*.

DAVID ROBINSON

#### BOOKS RECEIVED

THE BIG PICTURE. By Derek Monsey. (W. H. Allen, 30s.)  
 THE CINEMA OF JOSEPH LOSEY. By James Leahy. (Zwemmers, 12s. 6d.)  
 FILM REVIEW 1966-68. Edited by F. Maurice Speed. (W. H. Allen, 30s.)  
 A FILM TRILOGY. By Ingmar Bergman. (Calder and Boyars, 35s.)  
 GABLE. Compiled by Gabe Escoe and Ray Lee. (Price/Stern/Sloan, Los Angeles, \$1.95.)  
 THE HEAVIES. By Ian and Elisabeth Cameron. (Studio Vista, 10s. 6d.)  
 HOLLYWOOD: THE HAUNTED HOUSE. By Paul Mayersberg. (Allen Lane, the Penguin Press, 35s.)  
 KING COHN. By Bob Thomas. (Barrie and Rockliff, 35s.)  
 WHAT IS CINEMA? By André Bazin: essays selected and translated by Hugh Gray. (University of California Press/C.U.P., 46s.)



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## What is Cinema?

ANDRÉ BAZIN

Essays selected and translated by HUGH GRAY

Foreword by JEAN RENOIR

André Bazin, editor of *Cahiers du Cinéma*, friend and mentor of the new generation of cinéastes which included Truffaut, Godard, Resnais, Chabrol, was one of the most influential forces in the development of modern film. This book contains ten essays drawn from the volumes of *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma* which show the range of Bazin's thought: covering both the 'ontology' of film and the relations between film and other arts—the theatre, the novel and painting.

46s. net

## Motion Pictures from the Library of Congress Paper Print Collection 1894-1912

KEMP R. NIVER

Edited by BEBE BERGSTEN

Paper prints have only recently been made widely available through Mr. Niver's process for their restoration and transference on to projectable film stock. They provide us with a vast store of information on the development of film art in its early crucial stages. Kemp R. Niver has compiled this annotated guide of some 3,000 titles—American, British, French, and Scandinavian. For each film, information is given about the content, the makers, production and/or copyright date, the cast, any noteworthy techniques employed, and the condition of the print.

£11 net

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# CORRESPONDENCE

## Persona

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND

SIR,—I should like to express my appreciation of Susan Sontag's essay on Bergman's *Persona* in your last issue. It is not only a wonderfully sensitive and open-minded piece of interpretation, but one that always remains conscious of the limits to which interpretation can and should be pushed.

☐ If I may be allowed to add a few points to Miss Sontag's essay:

1). The introductory sequence. While I agree entirely that "any account which leaves out or dismisses as incidental the way *Persona* begins and ends hasn't been talking about the film that Bergman made," Miss Sontag says very little about the actual content of the initial sequence. I think it is clear that—among other things—it contains references back to Bergman's earlier work: the boy and the book (Lermontov's "A Hero of our Time") to *The Silence*; the spider to *Through a Glass Darkly*; and the slapstick sequence to *Prison*. The effect is something like Eliot's line: "These fragments I have shored against my ruins . . ." If one adds that the heroine's name is the same as that of Bergman's artist figure—half saint and half mountebank—in *The Face*, it becomes apparent that in *Persona* Bergman is dramatising his distrust (or self-distrust) of the artist and the function of art in our time. This receives external confirmation from an essay by Bergman (printed, in Sweden, as the introduction to the published version of the *Persona* script), which contains such remarks as: "Art is kept alive for sentimental reasons, as a conventional courtesy towards the past, a well-meaning concern for the ever more nervous citizens of leisure," and his description of art today as "intense, almost feverish; it resembles, it seems to me, a snake-skin full of ants. The snake itself is long since dead, eaten up, robbed of its venom, but the skin moves, full of busy life."

2). While *Persona* is not merely—or even mainly—a psychiatric case history, the relationship between Elisabeth and Alma does bear a remarkable resemblance to the transference relationship between doctor and patient that arises in psycho-analytic treatment. There the patient, unable to obtain the desired emotional response, begins to project his own emotion-charged fantasies on to the analyst. In the case of *Persona* one must add, of course, that since this relationship comes about involuntarily and is not controlled by an analyst, its effect will not be necessarily therapeutical. The first of Alma's fantasies (Elisabeth's appearance in her bedroom) is idyllic and sensual; the later fantasies—after Alma has read Elisabeth's letter—are full of hate and a desire for revenge. Their object is to show Elisabeth as a hopeless failure, both as a wife and a mother. This would agree with Miss Sontag's claim that "much more than critics have allowed of what happens in and around the beach cottage is most plausibly understood as Alma's fantasy." Indeed, I would go further and argue that Elisabeth does not speak at all throughout the film. The first 'lapse' Miss Sontag mentions—when Alma threatens Elisabeth with a pot of scalding water—I would regard as a revenge-fantasy on the part of Alma. The second occasion, when Elisabeth repeats the word 'Nothing' after Alma, forms part of a dream of Alma's.

3). I must confess, finally, that I am not altogether certain about the significance of Elisabeth's letter. Its dramatic function in the film is clear. Apart from that, however, its very ordinariness, its tone of slightly patronising amusement at Alma's antics, and its somewhat commonplace enthusiasm for the simple life, make one wonder what light the letter is meant to throw on Elisabeth and her problems. But perhaps it is not meant to do that at all. Perhaps it is a hint to the spectator to stop speculating about Elisabeth and her problems, and to concentrate his attention on Alma and what is happening to her, which is the real subject of the film. I would be very interested to hear Miss Sontag's opinion on this point.

Yours faithfully,

Academy Cinema, London, W.1.

IVO JAROSY

## The Whisperers

SIR,—May I correct your reviewer, Brenda Davies, on an important question of fact. She speaks of my adding a couple of instances of gratuitous violence to Mr. Robert Nicolson's original novel. This leads me to believe that she neither read Mr. Nicolson's novel very carefully, if at all, nor looked at my film with any degree of honesty.

She tells her readers that I make a young thug strike my leading character 'viciously across the face'. This is simply not true. The young thug in question was deliberately directed *not* to strike Mrs. Ross: the actor concerned, Michael Lees, was asked by me to play the scene with the absolute minimum of conventional screen menace. Since he is a good actor, he obliged. What actually happens is that he takes Mrs. Ross' jaw, almost *tenderly*, in one hand and merely gives it a shake.

Miss Davies also asks a question: "Does Forbes really see the Welfare State as a sort of depersonalised urban hell in which senseless cruelty flourishes and no eccentricity can be tolerated?" The answer is that I was not attempting to generalise, but merely telling the story of one old lady, Mrs. Ross, based not only on Mr. Nicolson's work, but also on first-hand observation. There are many Mrs. Rosses in the Welfare State and it is their tragedy that they cannot live up to the admirable statistics. To them, many aspects of life are, indeed, hell and perhaps the true purpose of my film was to suggest that the hell they are familiar with is more tolerable than the hell of other people's making. It is slipshod criticism and poor social understanding not to be totally aware of this from the outset.

Yours faithfully,

Pinewood Studios,  
Iver Heath, Bucks.

BRYAN FORBES

## Films and Feelings

SIR,—I wouldn't want to make the least protest against Philip French's opinion (Autumn, 1967) that my *Films and Feelings* is (a) all but unreadable (b) full of meaningless inverted commas (c) at its best, bafflingly pointless (d) wild, dubious and chatty (e) anti-intellectual (f) unlikely to win friends and influence people, and (g) rivalling even myself for fatuity.

However, I would crave the hospitality of your columns in order to correct those misrepresentations which amount to serious inaccuracies.

1). When French writes that I loathe critics and intellectuals, what he must mean is that I criticised one or two of the viewpoints taken up by SIGHT AND SOUND. In point of fact the book has references to over 100 critics, most of which are friendly references, and many thoroughly and obviously admiring. After all Susan Sontag goes on about 'critics' at great length in that very issue of SIGHT AND SOUND. Are we to conclude that she loathes critics and intellectuals?

2). French allows me numerous insights in the section on style, and it's not surprising, because he has misunderstood its argument. He says I say that "it isn't easy to distinguish between form and content." What I say is that in the context of 'form vs content' discussions form *is* content, i.e. that the attempt to distinguish is where one goes wrong. I wish French would learn to read.

3). The book isn't an assortment of essays, nor is it, and nor am I, chiefly concerned with questions of form and content. Of 24 chapters, only three are chiefly concerned with that issue and the book goes on from there into questions of content—namely, personality as language (Part 2), overt action as content (Part 3) and covert content ('overtones', 'symbolism', 'archetypes') (Part 4).

4). French thinks my general tone conflicts with my professed aims, and that if I want to win literary friends it's tactless of me to contrast 'a really good scriptwriter' with 'many a novelist'. I don't set out to win literary friends and if I did literary friends who'd resent that comparison aren't worth winning. I'm out to follow an argument, not seduce people.

5). My supposed admiration for the sturdy good sense of the average moviegoer is as mythical as my loathing of intellectuals. All I'm saying is that the public understands some films better than some intellectuals do, and better than some intellectuals think they do. When I criticise intellectuals it's for not being intellectual enough to know how ordinary moviegoers 'see' films.

In just the same way I'm not criticising Philip French for being an intellectual, but for being a sloppy intellectual who can't even read a book accurately.

I've selected five brief, salient points, omitting those less easily analysable cases of misrepresentation by implication and tone for which French clearly reserved all his intelligence and sensitivity. A study of his ploys, though instructive, would have nothing to do with film criticism because they have nothing to do with film criticism.

Yours faithfully,

Royal College of Art, S.W.7.

RAYMOND DURGNAT

## Ireland for the Irish

SIR,—If you won't call our Mr. Lynch The "Tea-Sack" we won't call your Mr. Wilson The "Prim-Monster"—O.K.? Taoiseach = Leader. Pronounced "Tae-shock" (roughly).

Yours faithfully,

Dublin.

GERALD DALY



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I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.  
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WARNER-PATHE for *Bonnie and Clyde*, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *Al Capone*, *Dillinger*, *The Rise and Fall of Legs' Diamond*.  
WARNER/SEVEN ARTS for *The Green Berets*.  
WARNER BROS. for *Little Caesar*, *Public Enemy*.  
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UNITED ARTISTS for *Baby Face Nelson*.  
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ANGLO AMALGAMATED for *Machine Gun Kelly*.  
CURZON for *Hunger*.  
ANTONY BALCH for *Jeu de Massacre*.  
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# FILM GUIDE

Films of special interest to SIGHT AND SOUND readers are denoted by one, two three or four stars.

**BEDAZZLED** (Fox) The Faust theme rehearsed as a self-indulgent vehicle for Peter Cook and Dudley Moore. The script (by Cook, from an idea by Cook and Moore) is an unhappy combination of Fourth Form humour and timid irreverence. (Eleanor Bron, Raquel Welch; director, Stanley Donen. DeLuxe Color, Panavision.)

\*\*\*\***BELLE DE JOUR** (Curzon) Buñuel's exquisite, beautifully measured and tantalisingly enigmatic version of Joseph Kessel's novel about a surgeon's wife who works afternoons in a Paris brothel. Said to be his last film, and may well be his best. (Catherine Deneuve, Jean Sorel, Geneviève Page, Michel Piccoli. Eastman Colour.)

**BERSERK!** (Columbia) Joan Crawford terrorising one and all as ring mistress of a circus where the inhabitants keep getting sawn in half or having spikes driven through their heads by a mysterious assassin. But the plot sags. (Ty Hardin, Diana Dors; director, Jim O'Connolly. Technicolor.)

\***BIG MOUTH, THE** (Columbia) Jerry Lewis as a meek bank auditor hunted by cohorts of crooks who mistake him for a double-crossing colleague. Spasmodically funny and good to look at, but painfully slow. (Susan Bay, Harold J. Stone; director, Jerry Lewis. Pathé Colour.)

**BILLION DOLLAR BRAIN** (United Artists) Third Harry Palmer adventure, in which our hero meets mad General Midwinter, leader of a computer-programmed private army trying to invade Latvia. Ken Russell's direction, full of zooms and tricks, does nothing to revive the wilting form of the strip and pop spy movie. (Michael Caine, Karl Malden, Françoise Dorléac. Technicolor, Panavision.)

**CAMELOT** (Warner-Pathé) Three-hour film of the Lerner-Loewe musical, with Vanessa Redgrave rising to her first Hollywood star occasion as faithless but sorrowful Guinevere. Pretty, stazy sets; enough knights, jousting, junketing, toy castles, etc., to reassure romantic Americans that there always was an England. (Richard Harris, David Hemmings, Franco Nero; director, Joshua Logan. Technicolor, Panavision 70.)

**CARNIVAL OF THIEVES** (Paramount) Another perfect robbery with a 'surprise' twist ending. This one takes place at fiesta time in Pamplona, but the attractive local colour is more than offset by the irritating assortment of foreign accents in which much of the deadly dialogue is lispied. (Stephen Boyd, Yvette Mimieux, Giovanna Ralli; director, Russell Rouse. Pathé Colour.)

\*\***COOL HAND LUKE** (Warner-Pathé) A caustically witty look at the American South and its chain-gangs today, this develops oddly (and rather uncomfortably) into a tract about myth-making and breaking. Paul Newman is splendid as the indomitable boss-baiter who becomes a hero to his fellow convicts, and Conrad Hall contributes some glittering camerawork. (George Kennedy, Jo Van Fleet; director, Stuart Rosenberg. Technicolor, Panavision.)

\***CUSTER OF THE WEST** (Cinerama) Custer as romantic-realist iron man up against Washington time-servers, pro-Indian liberals, etc. Rather odd account of events leading up to the Little Big Horn, veering between determinist historical debate and old-fashioned Cinerama roller-coastering. (Robert Shaw, Mary Ure, Jeffrey Hunter, Robert Ryan; director, Robert Siodmak. Technicolor, Super Technirama.)

**DANGER ROUTE** (United Artists) Sluggish thriller about a tired spy caught up in a web of double-dealing between London, Dorset and the Channel Isles. Whitehall, the CIA and the other

side all get a look in, but a tortuous script makes for little sense and less involvement. (Richard Johnson, Carol Lynley, Barbara Bouchet; director, Seth Holt. DeLuxe Color.)

**DR. FAUSTUS** (Columbia) The alliance between the Burtons and the OUDS perpetuated on film. Wayward production, borrowing stray lines from elsewhere in Marlowe and combining basic staginess with old-fashioned dabs at 'cinema'. Elizabeth Taylor materialises as Helen of Troy and other classical ladies. (Richard Burton, Andreas Teuber; directors, Richard Burton, Nevill Coghill. Technicolor.)

\*\*\***DUTCHMAN** (Planet) Brilliantly spare, edgy adaptation of LeRoi Jones' flaring racial-sexual duologue between white girl and coloured man on the New York subway. Impeccable direction from Anthony Harvey in his first film. (Shirley Knight, Al Freeman, Jr.)

\*\*\*\***EL** (Columbia) A little rough at the edges, perhaps, but otherwise this 1952 vintage Buñuel yields not an inch to *Belle de Jour* in its ferociously witty account of the paroxysmal progress of a jealous husband. (Arturo De Cordova, Delia Garcés.)

**EMPTY CANVAS, THE** (Planet) Adaptation of a Moravia novel about the abortive attempts of an uninspired painter to fill the void in his life by falling in love with a promiscuous artist's model. Indifferent performances by Horst Buchholz and Catherine Spaak as the young lovers, with the tedium slightly relieved by Bette Davis as the decayed Southern belle widow of an Italian count. (Director, Damiano Damiani.)

\*\***FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD** (Warner-Pathé) Schlesinger's film offers a visually exquisite reconstruction of Hardy's Wessex. But the actors never rise to the level of Richard MacDonald's designs, while Hardy's plot, stripped of his narrative style, appears crudely melodramatic. (Julie Christie, Terence Stamp, Peter Finch, Alan Bates. Technicolor, Panavision 70.) Reviewed.

\*\*\***FAR FROM VIETNAM** (Contemporary) Fascinating, cantankerous, tendentious, sometimes very impressive multi-directed propagandist film about Vietnam war. Godard and Resnais sequences ask questions; some others beg them. To be seen, on many counts. (Various directors. In colour.) Reviewed.

\*\***HOOR OF THE GUN** (United Artists) Wyatt Earp completes the business left unfinished ten years ago at the O.K. Corral. Strikingly literate script, cool, compelling direction from John Sturges, and a superbly laconic performance from Jason Robards as a tubercular Doc Holliday. (James Garner, Robert Ryan. DeLuxe Color, Panavision.)

\*\*\***HUNGER** (Curzon) Uneven but engaging adaptation of Knut Hamsun's remarkable novel about a young writer determined to keep up appearances and starve with dignity. Good period atmosphere, and Per Oscarsson's superb performance preserves most of Hamsun's quirkish humour. (Gunnel Lindblom; director, Henning Carlsen.) Reviewed.

\*\*\***JEU DE MASSACRE** (Antony Balch) Alain Jessua's second feature, every bit as bizarre and almost as engaging as *La Vie à l'Envers*. This time the hero finds fulfilment not in a blank wall but in a strip cartoon. (Jean-Pierre Cassel, Michel Duchaussoy, Claudine Auger. Eastman Colour.) Reviewed.

**JUNGLE BOOK, THE** (Disney) Not perhaps for Kipling fans, but surprisingly entertaining within the usual Disney limitations. Animation above par, and some delightful voices off, particularly from George Sanders as a menacingly suave Shere Khan. (Director, Wolfgang Reitherman. Technicolor.)

\*\*\***MARSEILLAISE, LA** (Contemporary) After *La Règle du Jeu*, it is the turn of *La Marseillaise* to be restored to its pristine state (almost—one scene is still missing). A rich, ambling, generous film, stamped every inch of the way with Renoir's personality. (Pierre Renoir, Andrex, Lise Delamare.) Reviewed.

\*\***NAKED HEARTS** (Contemporary) Edouard Luntz' *Les Coeurs Verts*, a strikingly honest portrait of misfit youth in the grimmer suburbs of Paris. Direction compellingly stark and undemonstrative, and a cast of amateurs gives the feel of things as they really are. (Erick Penet, Gérard Zimmerman, Maryse Maire.)

**NIGHT OF THE BIG HEAT** (Planet) Sci-fi thriller about alien invaders who require intense heat to survive and get it by burning people alive. Otherwise the temperature is lukewarm. (Christopher Lee, Peter Cushing, Patrick Allen; director, Terence Fisher. Eastman Colour.)

**PARIS IN AUGUST** (Contemporary) Fishing tackle salesman Charles Aznavour, left behind in Paris while his family go off to the seaside, inexplicably gets himself ensnared by giggly English model Susan Hampshire. A paper-thin confection bubbling over with insufferable English gaiety and insipid Gallic charm. (Michel de Ré, Daniel Ivernel; director, Pierre Granier-Deferre. Totalvision.)

\***POOR COW** (Warner-Pathé) A first feature from TV director Ken Loach (of *Cathy Come Home*), ranging patchily from the genuinely lyrical to the totally bathetic in its almost plotless view of the life of a young London mother left to fend for herself while her husband is in jail. Loach retains his remarkable touch with actors but shows unhappy signs of trendy influences. (Carol White, Terence Stamp. Eastman Colour.) Reviewed.

**PRETTY POLLY** (Rank) Suburban shop assistant Hayley Mills sets off on a world cruise and loses rather more than her spectacles in sinful Singapore; Trevor Howard takes time off from his Chinese whore to keep an avuncular eye on his wayward niece. Very flat. (Shashi Kapoor, Brenda de Banzie; director, Guy Green. Technicolor, Techniscope.)

**SMASHING TIME** (Paramount) Labourised slapstick comedy about two would-be trendsetters from the North out to conquer Carnaby Street. The moral which somewhat incongruously emerges is that swinging London is really just a myth. (Lynn Redgrave, Rita Tushingham, Michael York; director, Desmond Davis. In Colour.)

\***TAMING OF THE SHREW, THE** (Columbia) Much more Zeffirelli than Shakespeare, with the emphasis on colour, clothes, Padua in an apparently permanent state of carnival, and extras mopping and mowing in every corner of the screen. The Burtons acquit themselves tolerably. (Cyril Cusack, Michael Hordern, Michael York. Technicolor, Panavision.)

**THEATRE OF DEATH** (L.I.P.) Mish-mash of vampirism, hypnotism, necrophilia and the occult, set in a Parisian 'Théâtre de Mort'. Tries hard and mostly unsuccessfully to be gruesome. (Christopher Lee, Lelia Goldoni; director, Samuel Gallu. Technicolor, Techniscope.)

\***THOROUGHLY MODERN MILLIE** (Rank) Zesty Twenties' musical. Julie Andrews charlestons her way through assorted hazards to marry a millionaire, and Beatrice Lillie, with chopsticks in her hair, makes a superbly sinister white slave trader. (Mary Tyler Moore, James Fox, Carol Channing; director, George Roy Hill. Technicolor.)

**TONITE LET'S ALL MAKE LOVE IN LONDON** (Lorrimer) Peter Whitehead's half-jaundiced, half-sympathetic look at the swinging London scene. Pop, psychedelia and the Portobello Road, and already as dated as last week's colour supplement. (In Colour.)

\*\*\***TORTURE GARDEN, THE** (Columbia) Four cunning variations on the theme of terror, adapted from stories by Robert Bloch. Literate script and excellent performances (especially from Jack Palance as a manic collector of Edgar Allan Poe relics) make it highly enjoyable. (Burgess Meredith, John Standing, Michael Bryant; director, Freddie Francis. Technicolor.)

\*\*\***ULYSSES** (Columbia) The film itself scarcely justifies all the fuss, but in gallantly tackling the impossible it does strain off some of the Joycean essence, especially towards the end with Barbara Jefford's majestic Molly Bloom making the obscenities sound really musical. (Milo O'Shea, Maurice Rooves; director, Joseph Strick. Panavision.)

\*\*\***WAR WAGON, THE** (Rank) Minor league *El Dorado*, with John Wayne and Kirk Douglas as a pair of elderly but still very active gunslingers in partnership with wily renegade Indian Howard Keel to ambush an iron-plated gold wagon. Affectionate direction from Burt Kennedy. (Robert Walker, Keenan Wynn. Technicolor, Panavision.)

\***WATERHOLE 3** (Paramount) Repetitive but often engaging comedy Western with James Coburn leading a madcap hunt for stolen bullion buried in the desert. A little too conscious of its jokes, but some of them work. (Carroll O'Connor, Margaret Blye; director, William Graham. Technicolor, Techniscope.)

\***WHO ARE YOU, POLLY MAGGOO?** (Contemporary) William Klein's glossy and superficial film about the glossy, superficial world of fashion photography. Strictly ephemeral, but visually distracting and often amusing. (Dorothy MacGowan, Jean Rochefort, Sami Frey.) Reviewed.



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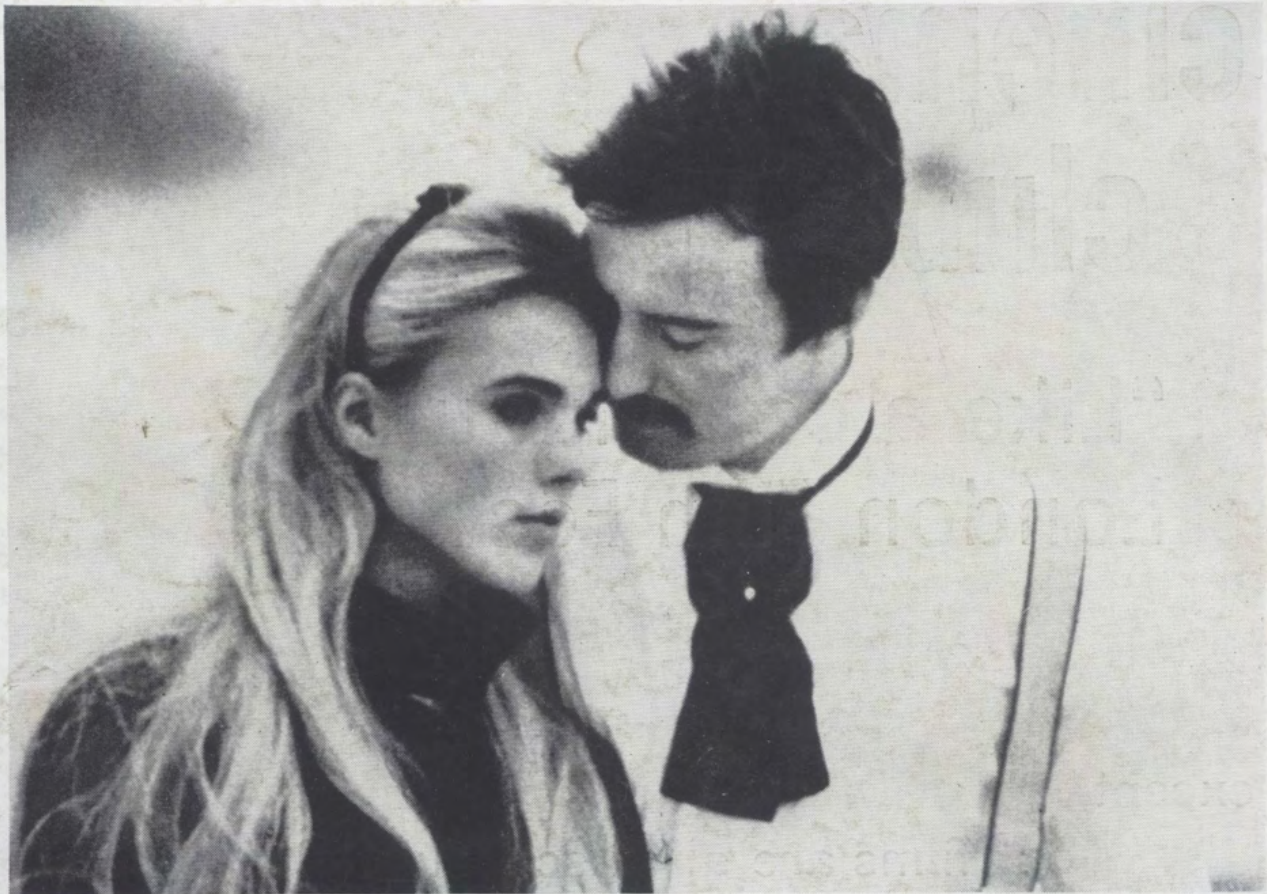
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